DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 364 651 UD 029 637

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TITLE Building School-Family Partnerships for Learning: Workshops for Urban Educators.
INSTITUTION Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC. Office of Research.
PUB DATE Sep 93
NOTE 379p.
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC16 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Educational Cooperation; Educational Policy; Educational Practices; Elementary Education; Elementary School Students; Ethnic Groups; Family Life; *Family School Relationship; Home Programs; Homework; *Parent Participation; Parent Teacher Cooperation; Racial Differences; School Districts; *Teacher Workshops; Urban Schools; *Urban Teaching

ABSTRACT

This sourcebook is designed to give urban educators new information and strategies for working with parents of elementary school students through grade 6. Its five workshops explore how family life, school programs, teacher practices, and district policies can help build school-family partnerships for learning. Threaded through these workshops are the key concepts of school and family partnership, home learning activities, home learning environments, and family strengths. Each workshop contains a leader's guide, transparency masters, and a set of handouts to be reproduced for participants. Guidance is provided for a 2-hour version. Workshop topics include: (1) families as learning environments; (2) communications skills and strategies; (3) homework and home learning activities; (4) school programs and practices; and (5) school districts. An appendix presents information on strategies to reach and involve parents, Federal Government programs, different racial and ethnic backgrounds, annotated lists of 18 reading materials and 13 resource organizations, and a participant evaluation form. (SLD)

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ED 364 651

Building School-Family Partnerships for Learning:

Workshops for Urban Educators

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Commissioned by:

Office of Research
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
U. S. Department of Education
Washington, D.C.

September, 1993

UD029637

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY
FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND IMPROVEMENT

October 19, 1993

Dear Colleague:

I am pleased to send you Building School-Family Partnerships for Learning: Workshops for Urban Educators. You may have requested a copy, served on the planning committee, provided case material, taken part in the pilot testing phase, or be an organization with special interest in this area. In any case, we hope you will find this material useful in your work.

Designed primarily for use with local school staffs and policymakers, these interactive workshops explore how family life, teacher practices, school programs, and district policies can work together to build school-family partnerships. A leader's guide, transparency masters, and a set of handouts are included for each workshop. An overview of this sourcebook with brief descriptions of the five workshops and a cover sheet for your ringbinder are attached. See also the introductory sections before the workshops.

Copies are limited, but you may reproduce these materials freely. There are no copyrights. Note that the introduction, leader guides, and appendix are printed on two sides of the paper.

We would like to help all interested staff developers and would welcome names and addresses of such people you know in other urban school districts. We would also like to know of your experience with the workshops so as to benefit others.

Sincerely,

Oliver Moles

Oliver C. Moles, Ph.D.
Project Director
Office of Research, OERI

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WASHINGTON, D.C. 20208-5649

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BUILDING SCHOOL-FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS FOR LEARNING: WORKSHOPS FOR URBAN EDUCATORS

OVERVIEW

This sourcebook is designed to give urban educators new information and strategies for working with parents of elementary school students (grades K-6). Its five workshops written by eminent developers explore how family life, school programs, teacher practices, and district policies can help build school-family partnerships for learning. Each workshop is based on recent research and best available practices. The intended audience is primarily teachers, administrators, and other school personnel.

Four key concepts are threaded through these workshops: school-family partnerships, home learning activities, home learning environments, and family strengths. Home learning as used here includes homework, leisure reading, family discussions, and other home activities which supplement and reinforce schoolwork.

Many studies indicate that school-initiated activities to change the home educational environment can exert a strong influence on student learning, even in schools serving low-income and minority families. This sourcebook demonstrates various ways that schools can take the initiative in reaching out and working with families as equal partners.

Each workshop contains a leader's guide, transparency masters, and a set of handouts to be reproduced for participants. The leader's guide includes an overview of the workshop, notes on needed preparations, background information, and how to conduct each workshop activity.

Guidance for a two hour version is found within each workshop. Each has an optional warm-up activity and most include planning for next steps. This sourcebook is a revision of *Building Home-School Partnerships for Learning: Workshops for Urban Educators* which was pilot tested during the 1992-93 school year. Descriptions of the workshops follow.

Families as Learning Environments. Topics in this initial workshop include the benefits of parent involvement in home learning, characteristics of successful home learning environments, and the diversity of contemporary American families. It aims to help participants recognize both family strengths and the obstacles families face, and begins to explore how school resources can help them build more successful learning environments.

Communication Skills and Strategies. In this workshop participants are helped to analyze and develop their competencies for interpersonal communication with diverse parents. School and staff practices that may hinder and improve school-family communication are studied. Local communication practices for different occasions are analyzed in terms of making them more effective.

Homework and Home Learning Activities. High quality homework assignments and helping families reinforce and extend classroom instruction are central to this workshop. The related research is reviewed, and the importance of schoolwide homework guidelines and practices as well as the teacher's role are discussed. Interactive home learning assignments are developed, and some family learning programs identified.

School Programs and Practices. This workshop helps participants identify schoolwide factors that promote or hinder the development of school-family partnerships. It discusses five kinds of partnership roles, and uses this information to analyze two case studies. It makes the case for schoolwide actions to build strong partnerships with families.

School Districts. This workshop focuses on district-wide policies and policy supports for effective school-family partnership programs. Supports for policy during its development, implementation and maintenance are considered as well as some existing school board policies, case studies of actual policy implementation, and the current research literature. This workshop is designed for school board members and others engaged in district-level policy development or review.

Appendix. It presents information on (1) further strategies to reach and involve parents; (2) federal government programs; (3) families of different racial, ethnic, and nationality backgrounds; and (4) annotated lists of readings and resource organizations; (5) a participant evaluation form.

The workshops may be presented individually and adapted to the leader's style and local needs. The most benefit is likely to come from presenting all four school-oriented workshops with time between sessions to read, try out some planned activities, and assess needs and progress.

There is no charge for the sourcebook, but supplies are limited. It comes on 3-hole paper and all parts may be reproduced without permission. Users must provide their own tabs to sections and ringbinder.

More on the structure and development of the workshops can be found in the introduction to the sourcebook. We would welcome any comments on the workshops, their content and format.

For further information contact Oliver Moles, Project Director, Office of Research, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, Washington, DC 20208-5649. Phone (202) 219-2211. 9/93

Building School-Family Partnerships for Learning: Workshops for Urban Educators

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(Pages within workshops are unnumbered except for the leader's guides and the T numbers on transparencies. Users may want to put tabs between major sections.)

BUILDING SCHOOL-FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS FOR LEARNING: WORKSHOPS FOR URBAN EDUCATORS

INTRODUCTION

Oliver C. Moles
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
U.S. Department of Education

This sourcebook is designed to share with urban educators information and strategies for working with parents. It contains five workshops with leader guides, transparency masters, and handouts designed for local staff development activities in elementary education (K-6). Urban educators are the main audience although this material may also be useful in suburban and rural education.

The workshops explore family life, school programs and teacher practices, and district policies that can help build school-family partnerships. The aim is to help teachers and administrators work more effectively with all parents (and family members who may take their place) to strengthen learning activities at home that promote success in school. If all parents are to be involved, schools will need to take the lead -- thus the emphasis on schools first in the title of this sourcebook instead of the more familiar home-school partnerships.

Schools involved in restructuring and reform efforts to strengthen student achievement may be particularly interested in strengthening school-family partnerships. Many studies indicate that school-initiated activities to change the home educational environment can have a strong influence on school performance, especially in schools serving low-income and minority families (Henderson, 1987; Kagan, 1984; Leler, 1983; Tangri & Moles, 1987; Walberg, 1984). In the process parents come to support schools and school personnel more, and educators report that this support brings them greater satisfaction and shows them how to build on the interest parents have in their children's education (Epstein, 1991). Parent involvement is not a cure-all or substitute for good schooling, but when school staff help parents strengthen home learning, students can indeed achieve more in school.

School-Family Partnerships

To strengthen home learning, schools and families need to work together as equal partners. Parents and educators both contribute in major ways to the education of young people. If parents are to be active and continuing partners, schools must also give them frequent information on children's school programs and progress. For partnerships to thrive, means must be created for continuing exchange of information between schools and families, reaching agreement on joint concerns, and working toward common goals.

These workshops build on the premise that almost all families have important and often untapped strengths related to their children's education which they can bring to home-school partnerships. One is the intimate knowledge parents have of their children's development, needs, and talents. Another is a keen interest in children's schooling and future, while a third is the desire to work with the schools for their children's benefit.

The low level of contact educators have with many urban parents should not be taken as evidence that parents do not care about their children's education. Numerous studies show that they do care (Chavkin & Williams, 1989; Epstein, 1983; Harris et al., 1987; Menacker et al., 1988; Moles, 1993). Instead, obstacles to greater contact and collaboration lie in other areas, such as the current skills, opportunities for contact, and the varied needs and traditions of families and educators. These too will be explored in the workshops.

In summary, the demands of modern work and family life and the diversity of urban families challenge educators to reexamine traditional ways of interacting with parents. Schools will have to devise new approaches to reach and work effectively with all parents. Suggestions for doing this are the core of these workshops.

Structure of the Workshops

There are four key concepts threaded through these workshops: school-family partnerships, home learning activities, home learning environments, and family strengths. For reference, each is defined in the Families as Learning Environments Workshop Handouts.

This sourcebook contains the following workshops as well as related resource materials in an appendix. The first four workshops are for teachers, administrators, other staff, and parent leaders in individual schools. The last workshop is specifically designed for those involved in developing district parent involvement policies.

1. **Families as Learning Environments.** This workshop sets the tone for the series by exploring the strengths and diversity of families and ways schools can help families strengthen home learning environments for their children.

2. **Communication Skills and Strategies.** This workshop helps develop competencies needed for effective school-family communication and analyzes the kinds of communications possible and their benefits.

3. **Homework and Home Learning Activities.** This workshop examines aspects of homework assignments, how to modify them to involve family members, and several established family learning programs.

4. **School Programs and Practices.** This workshop shows how schoolwide planning and initiation of activities can better support parent and teacher collaboration.

5. **School District Policies and Supports.** This workshop shows how individual school efforts can be greatly enhanced when their districts have policies and supports for policies related to home-school partnerships.

The main topics in each workshop are listed in its overview section. Each workshop is planned for two hours. Optional materials are noted if more time is available. *To stay within allotted times, all leaders should review and rehearse the material carefully.*

Most workshops end with a discussion of plans for action. Notes on needed preparations shared by all workshops are presented after this introduction. The appendix contains additional readings, research summaries, federal initiatives, a form for evaluating workshops, and other resources not used directly in the workshops. It also contains a two-page overview of the sourcebook which may be useful for publicity purposes.

An important feature of this sourcebook is that a researcher and a practitioner expert on parent involvement issues worked together to develop each workshop. In this way we have tried to incorporate the latest and best information from both research and practice, and also check the information from one against the other. The workshop developers are listed at the end of this introduction.

Suggested Uses of This Volume

These workshops can be used in a variety of ways. Each is self-contained and may be presented by itself. If only one hour blocks are available, each can be broken into parts. The most benefit is likely to come from presenting the entire set of workshops with enough time between sessions to read, try out some planned activities, and assess needs and progress.

Leaders are encouraged to adapt the materials to their own styles, situations and the needs of participants. *It is recommended that administrators take part since many of the workshop activities concern the whole school and their support is needed for schoolwide changes.* Users should understand that the main emphasis is on helping teachers and schools develop better ways of working with families. This is not a parent training or parent education manual.

The focus of this sourcebook is on elementary school students (grades K-6) since more is known from research and practice about home-school relationships among younger students. Where possible, the upper elementary grades (4-6) are emphasized since school outreach and parent involvement often begin to decline at these grade levels.

This sourcebook comes on 3-hole paper to insert into a loose-leaf binder because it is meant to be an evolving resource. With this format, changes can easily be made based on local needs and experience. Sections can be removed for reproduction and self study. We encourage users to add material to suit local needs, and to tell us of new material or approaches to the workshops that might help others.

All material may be copied freely. Permissions to reproduce all copyrighted material have been secured. Users should note that reference to commercially developed materials does not imply endorsement of these products.

Development of the Sourcebook

This project had its origins in the accumulated evidence that a student's home activities can improve school learning, that parents *can* influence and usually *want* to improve these activities, but that they need encouragement and assistance from educators to do this. A proposal for this project was shaped around these ideas, and funds allotted by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) in the U.S. Department of Education. The first editor of this volume and director of this project works in the OERI Office of Research.

This project represents the accumulated knowledge and perspectives from a range of contributors. A small planning conference was held in Washington D.C. in March 1991. At this meeting educators, policymakers, education association representatives, program developers, and researchers familiar with parent involvement issues reviewed preliminary plans. Representatives of local and state education agencies and individual schools have been involved from the start to make the materials as useful as possible.

Another conference in the fall of 1991 reviewed draft materials for this sourcebook. A spring 1992 pilot version was tested by a few school districts. The workshop developers met during the summer of 1992 to review that experience and plan a new version for wider pilot testing during the 1992-93 school year. After consideration of the pilot experience, final editing of the workshops was done by Oliver Moles and Diane D'Angelo during the summer of 1993. Perhaps the most important final change was to reduce the size of each workshop to make it more realistically manageable within a two hour time period.

We would welcome any comments on the workshops, their content, and format. We hope you will find this sourcebook useful and responsive to your needs.

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WORKSHOP DEVELOPERS

1. Families as Learning Environments

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Diane Scott-Jones (contributor)
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2. Communication Skills and Strategies

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3. Homework and Home Learning Activities

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4. School Programs and Practices

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Diane D'Angelo
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Each set of pilot workshop materials was reviewed by Jackie Walsh, Training and Education Consultant (Montgomery, AL) and the other developers as well as the project director.

WORKSHOP LEADER PREPARATION

Oliver C. Moles and Diane D'Angelo

Building School-Family Partnerships for Learning: Workshops for Urban Educators is a series of five two-hour workshops. It was developed by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement to stimulate school administrators' and classroom teachers' interest in and attitudes toward developing school-family partnerships, particularly those that support parents as the gatekeepers of home-learning environments.

Think for a moment about your own learning. If you are reading this in preparation for presenting one or more of the workshops within the series, you are obviously interested in the sharing of knowledge and acquisition of new skills. Think back to when you were a child. How did you come to value learning and/or knowledge acquisition? What was the role of your family? What was the role of teachers in developing that value system? Were there other major influences? Although each person's answers to these questions will differ, a common thread is that families, schools and communities all play a role in children's learning.

The workshops within this training sourcebook were built on the premise that almost all families have important and often untapped strengths related to their children's education. This sourcebook was designed both to raise the awareness of educators as to the vital role home learning environments play in the education of children, and to provide strategies for educators wishing to improve and/or develop more effective school-family partnerships that will in turn support home learning environments. More specifically, the workshops in this series focus on what schools, administrators and teachers can do to take the lead in promoting school-family partnerships by reexamining current programs, practices and strategies.

How the Workshops Fit Together

While each workshop stands on its own, they were designed to "fit together" as a series that ideally would be done over time to allow participants an opportunity to translate workshop information into practice. Although individual workshop leaders will need to tailor the workshop series and individual workshops to participants' needs and interests and to work within local time constraints, ideally the order of the series should be as follows:

1) **Families as Learning Environments.** This workshop sets the tone for the series by exploring the diversity among families and their strengths as learning environments for children.

2) **Communication Skills and Strategies.** This workshop helps develop competencies needed for effective school-family communication and analyzes the kinds of communications possible and their benefits.

3) **Homework and Home Learning Activities.** In this workshop participants will examine aspects of homework assignments, how to modify them to involve family members, and several established family learning programs.

4) **School Programs and Practices.** This workshop identifies school level factors that hinder or promote school-family partnerships and discusses five types of partnership roles.

The workshop entitled **School District Policies and Supports** was designed as a supplement to the other workshops listed above. It discusses the critical role of district leadership in creating the necessary policies, supports, and context for school level initiatives to build school-family partnerships and is meant for a separate audience. (See next section).

Audience

The target audience for the first four workshops in the series is teachers, administrators, and other personnel from individual schools. Including principals is critical since many of the workshop activities concern the whole school and their support is needed for school level changes.

The workshops can be conducted for an entire school staff or for teams from several schools together. If teams are sent, it is important that they be representative of their school and influential with other staff. Participant involvement may be difficult to manage in very large groups. Therefore, we recommend that groups be kept to 30-40 persons.

Parent leaders who will be involved in future planning and activities would be a very useful addition, and their participation is recommended. They might be members of a school advisory council, a school restructuring committee, the PTA board or other parent group. If parent leaders are not included, they need to be actively involved in next-step planning of school-family partnership activities.

The **School District Policies and Support** workshop is designed for a different target audience: district level policy and decision makers (e.g., school boards). Their role in supporting the development, implementation and maintenance of school-family partnerships is crucial if ideas gained through this workshop series are to translate into practice. The decision as to when to offer this particular workshop to maximize its effect should be determined by workshop leaders.

Workshop Preparations

Although individual workshop guides may note some specific preparation, there are some common steps in preparing for all workshops:

- prior to each presentation become familiar with the information in the leader's guide and handouts;

- review any recommended readings and resources suggested within the leaders's guide;

- adapt the materials to your own presentation style, situation, and the needs of the participants;

- talk with other principals and teachers who have addressed the issues, developed good materials, and implemented activities for ideas to use in the workshop;

- learn about the current practices and programs of the school regarding the topic of the workshop;

- identify unique school or community characteristics and demographics that might influence current programs and practices;

- duplicate sufficient copies of the handouts for workshop participants;

- make needed transparencies from the masters;

- select a method for keeping track of time (e.g., timer); and

- gather the following supplies:
    - flip chart, stand, pad of poster paper
    - marking pens and masking tape
    - overhead projector and screen
    - name tags, pens and pencils
    - blank transparencies (if leader intends to write response etc. on them)

In addition to the steps above, be sure to select a room layout that allows clear view of the overheads and facilitates interaction when participants are in a large group and enough space for participants to break into small groups. If you have difficulty in finding appropriate space, you will need to review each of the workshop activities to see if they are possible within your meeting space and tailor those activities if they are not. The key is to ensure that your environment is conducive for learning

Finally make sure to post a welcoming sign such as this:

Welcome to (name of workshop)

1. Please make a name tag.
2. While you wait
    - have some refreshments
    - meet someone new
    - look at the handouts

If possible, find a workshop host who can handle the site preparations and announcements, arrange the room, get equipment, organize refreshments, and plan child care if necessary.

Even when someone else handles these tasks, the leader should check all preparations before the session.

Workshop Tone

Workshop leaders will want to stress throughout the workshops the need for schools to develop a positive warm, and welcoming environment for parents, and effective communication strategies to and from parents as the foundation for involving families effectively. Specific ways of doing this are discussed in the workshops.

Workshop Endings

At the close of each workshop, participants are urged to develop an action plan for next steps they will take to further the workshop's objectives. In some cases this is an optional activity depending on time available. Leaders are urged to make note of these plans, be available for questions and consultation afterward, and encourage participants to discuss results of their activities at future meetings.

A Word of Caution

Building a strong school-family partnership program that realizes the potential for parents to support their children's learning both at home and at school will require a long-term concerted commitment by school staff and ongoing effort as new children and parents each year enter the school system. Each of these workshops is planned for two hours. They will all raise awareness and suggest some possibilities for action. To bring about significant change will require administrators, teachers, support staff and parents to engage in ongoing study, planning, program implementation and evaluation of activities at the school site.

Building School-Family Partnerships for Learning:
Workshops for Urban Educators

Families as Learning Environments

Workshop Leader's Guide

Developed for
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
U. S. Department of Education
by Anne T. Henderson

OVERVIEW

KEY CONCEPT:

Every family functions as a home learning environment, regardless of its structure, economic level, or ethnic or cultural background. Consequently, every family has the potential to support and improve the academic achievement of its children.

RATIONALE AND PURPOSE:

Our country has always had a dynamic demographic history, but the changes in families over the last twenty years have been dramatic. These changes include more single parents and working mothers, more children living in poverty, and more immigrant families especially from Latin America and Asia. The schools are attempting to work with such families, but schools must come to know and understand better the diverse family backgrounds of their students before they can reach them effectively.

The purpose of this workshop is to explore how schools can support diverse urban families in developing strong home learning environments, thereby enhancing the potential of their children to succeed in school.

LEARNER OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this workshop, the participants will be able to:

1. Understand the connection between the home learning environment and student achievement

2. Recognize the strengths inherent in families

3. Identify the components of strong home learning environments that cut across diverse family structures, economic levels, and ethnic or cultural backgrounds, and that adapt to the changing needs of children as they develop from kindergarten through 6th grade

4. Recognize obstacles to building strong home learning environments and the resources schools can provide to help families.

ACTIVITIES:		TIME ESTIMATE
#1	Warm up and Introduction: What Did Your Family Do at Home to Help You be Successful in School?	20 min
#2	Benefits of Parent Involvement in Home Learning and Strengths of Families.	20 min
#3	Successful Home Learning Environments for Children from Kindergarten to 6th grade.	25 min
	Break	10 min
#4	How Schools Can Help Families Build More Successful Learning Environments	35 min
#6	Summary	10 min
		120 min

Transparency masters and copies of participants handouts are in sections following this guide.

PREPARATION FOR THE WORKSHOP

Please follow the instructions for preparing all workshops found in the beginning of this volume. This includes information on all equipment and materials needed to conduct the workshops. In addition, these following special arrangements should be noted.

Sometime before this first workshop, the leader will need to collect information on the families and students served by the workshop school(s) so as to understand well their communities - who they serve and what changes have occurred recently. Additionally, you can use these as points of reference throughout your presentation so as to make this workshop as relevant as possible to the particular audience to which you are presenting.

Also, prior to the workshop, post pictures around the room of children and/or families with children from various ethnic groups: European American, African American, Asian, Pacific Islander, Hispanic, Native American. Write the key concept statement and the learner objectives on chart paper or poster board and keep both these charts in view throughout the session.

NOTE: Although we acknowledge the fact that some families ARE seriously troubled, this workshop will not address extreme behavior. The focus will be on the variations that exist within the range of normal, healthy families.

Activity #1: Warm-Up and Introduction: What Did Your Family Do at Home to Help You be Successful in School?

Objective: The participants will become acquainted with the structure of the workshops and with each other, and become personally involved with the topic of the workshop.

Recommended Time: 20 minutes

Directions and Procedures:

1. **Introductions and Workshop Overview.** (A maximum of **10 minutes** should be allocated for this segment 1 of Activity 1. Be sure to pace yourself so as to allow some time at the end for participant reactions to workshop objectives.)

    a. Introduce yourself and present the key concept that will be the focus of this workshop. ***Use T-1.***

    > **Key Concept: "Every family functions as a home learning environment, regardless of its structure, economic level, ethnic or cultural background. Consequently, every family has the potential to support and improve the academic achievement of its children."** ***Refer participants to Handout #1.***

    b. Explain to participants that this is the first in a series of four workshops for school staffs included in a sourcebook entitled "Building School-family Partnerships for Learning: Workshops for Urban Educators." A fifth workshop, "School District Policies and Supports," was designed especially for those people developing and revising policies in parent involvement. ***Use T-2.***

    BUILDING SCHOOL-FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS FOR
    LEARNING: WORKSHOPS FOR URBAN EDUCATORS

    Workshop 1: "Families as Learning Environments"
    Workshop 2: "Communication Skills and Strategies"
    Workshop 3: "Homework and Home Learning Activities"
    Workshop 4: "School Programs and Practices"
    Workshop 5: "School District Policies and Supports"

    The Office of Research within the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, produced this sourcebook for educators attempting to help urban parents strengthen home learning activities among elementary school students (grades K-6).

    The key concept driving this workshop, which focuses upon families themselves, is critical to the concepts developed through the other workshops because school programs, teacher practices, and district policies should all be developed by reference to the nature and potential of the families to be served. (At this point, advise participants of the schedule for other workshops which your district/organizational unit will offer to them, and encourage them to attend all applicable workshops).

c. Take a few minutes at this point to examine two of the key terms and their definitions so as to begin building a common vocabulary and set of understandings. ***Use T-3 and direct participants to Handout #2.*** Go over the definition of the terms below, and allow time for participant questions and clarification, if needed. ***(Allow 5 minutes)***

School-family partnerships - The sustained mutual collaboration, support, and participation of school staffs and families at home or at the school site in activities and efforts that directly and positively affect the success of children's learning and progress in school. The partners need to be treated as equals because both parents and educators contribute in major ways to the education of young people. To succeed the partnership must be based upon mutual trust and respect with educators taking the lead to develop and nurture these key ingredients of effective collaboration.

Home Learning Activities - All the ways that learning is fostered at home with and without encouragement from schools. For present purposes we are most interested in those ways that schools can influence home learning. These activities fall into three broad categories:

- homework, which is an extension of class learning, and primarily meant for children to complete outside the classroom on their own;
- home learning activities suggested by the teacher in which the parent or other family members are meant to be active partners. These suggestions are given to supplement and expand what is covered in school and give parents a guided opportunity to join in their children's learning;
- family-initiated home learning activities such as leisure reading, family discussions, religious and cultural activities, games, and chores in which parents are likely to be actively involved with their children.

c. ***Place T-4 (Learner Objectives) on the overhead projector and review the objectives.*** Ask participants if they have questions about the objectives of the workshop or any other areas of major concern. If questions are raised, note them on flip chart and indicate which ones will be addressed in this workshop and which will need to be explored in future workshops or through other means. (Be certain to familiarize yourself with the contents of the Appendix as well as that of the other three workshops for school staffs so that you may point participants to these resources.)

d. Ask participants if these objectives meet their expectations? Take a short time to respond to any questions or concerns.

2. Orientation Exercise

Ask participants to reflect for a minute on this question: **"What did your parents do to help you be successful in school?"** Then ask each to share **one** of their responses. Reporting should continue in a fast-paced, round-robin fashion until all participants have given at least one response. Discussion should not be invited at this point. Workshop leader records all activities on chart paper for future reference. *(Post this paper on the wall.)*

Debrief this brainstorming exercise by stating that the list they have generated illustrates that parents can be involved in their children's education in a variety of ways. Some of the examples (select one or two ideas from the list such as volunteering or parent-teacher conferences) will relate to activities that require a parent's attendance in school. However, many of the examples illustrate **the variety of ways parents are supportive of their children's education outside the view of the school**. Comprehensive school-family partnerships recognize and respect this diversity of involvement by using a variety of strategies to reach out to all parents. (Researcher Joyce Epstein (1992), Johns Hopkins University, has developed a typology of school-family partnerships that addresses six types of activities.) While we recognize the value of all the different types of parent involvement activities, this workshop will focus on those activities that strengthen and support home learning.

Remind them that one purpose of this workshop is to explore how families with diverse structures, economic levels, and ethnic or cultural backgrounds develop strong home learning environments, thereby enhancing the potential of their children to succeed in school. ***Allow 10 minutes.***

Please note: There may be one or two in the group who feel they had little or no support. If so, make the point that students can be successful without extensive parent involvement or participation, but that it is harder to do so. If a participant mentions severe physical punishment, try to find another who succeeded without this form of parental intervention. While you should generally refrain from making value judgments about the nature of the support, you might want to ask if a questionable practice was truly supportive. Then point out that our purpose is to uncover activities that truly support achievement in school. The common thread is the genuine concern of the parents and the importance they attach to their children's school experience.

Activity #2: Benefits of Parent Involvement in Home Learning and the Strengths of Families

Objective: The participants will understand the positive connection between parent involvement in home learning and student achievement and the strengths families have to support their children.

Recommended Time: 20 minutes

Directions and Procedures:

1. While we recognize the value of all types of activities, this workshops series will focus on activities as they relate to strengthening home learning environments because studies indicate that school-initiated activities to help parents change the home educational environment can have a strong influence on children's school performance. Most of these studies were done in schools serving low-income and minority families (See references to Henderson, 1987; Kagan, 1984; Leler, 1983; Tangri & Moles, 1987; Walberg, 1984 in Introduction). ***Allow 2 minutes.***

2. Most parents want to know how to help their own children at home in order to help them succeed in school. But school practices of partnership with families decline with each grade level, and drop dramatically at the transition to the middle grades (Epstein & Connor, 1992). To build strong school-family partnerships, particularly those that support and promote home learning environments will take a collaborative effort. But these efforts can be rewarding for all the stakeholders - students, parents and teachers.

   Research shows that when parents involve their children in learning activities at home, parent-child relationships improve, their children tend to do better in school, parents become more positive about schools, and school personnel morale improves. Let's look at some more specific findings.

   If there is a strong component of parent involvement, students perform better than those in programs with less parent involvement. (Henderson, 1988). ***Use T-5*** and state that other benefits of parent involvement for students include:

   Benefits of Parent Involvement for Students

   - more positive attitudes toward school;
   - higher achievement in reading;
   - higher quality and more grade appropriate homework;
   - completion of more homework;
   - observing more similarities between family and school. (Epstein, 1991)

   Parents also benefit. They develop a greater appreciation of their important role in their children's education, a sense of adequacy and self-worth, strengthened social networks, and motivation to resume their own education. (Davies, 1988). ***Use T-6***

"Benefits of Parent Involvement for Parents"

- receive ideas from school on how to help children;
- learn more about educational programs and how the school works
- become more supportive of children;
- become more confident about ways to help children learn (Epstein, 1992; Henderson, 1987; Liontos, 1992)

Finally, teachers benefit. Joyce Epstein has shown that teachers discover their lives are made easier if they get help from parents, and parents who are involved tend to have more positive views of teachers. (Epstein, 1992) Being involved also leads to feelings of ownership, resulting in increased support of schools and willingness to pay taxes to fund schools. (Davies, 1988) ***Use T-7 and refer to Handout #3.***

"Benefits of Parent Involvement for Teachers and Schools"

- teacher morale improves
- parents rate teachers and schools higher
- student achievement improves
- parents support schools and bond issues (Liontos, 1992)

A word of caution: The home environment, however, is not the ONLY factor related to student success in school. Given the many factors outside any family's control, moderate change in student progress is probably the most appropriate expectation when family learning is enhanced. Programs to increase parent involvement do not substitute for a high quality experience in school, or for efforts to improve the curriculum and teaching methods. Even though families have an important influence on their children's achievement, the responsibility to address children's problems in school should not be laid on the home. Mutual support is the answer. ***Allow 10 min.***

2. End by stating that all families have strengths that they can build on to encourage their children and to structure a home environment that supports learning. ***Use T-8, Strengths of Families***, refer to ***Handout #4,*** and stress the following points:

   As their children's first and most important teachers, parents have vast opportunities to serve as role models and to guide their children as they grow.

   Parents have intimate knowledge of their children's needs, skills, and interests; they know their children better than anyone else does. This can be an important resource for teachers.

> children to be successful. Increasingly, parents (especially low-income, minority parents) are reputed to show little interest and support for school. But program developers and evaluators with broad experience have found that all kinds of parents are very interested in their children's education (Moles, 1993).
>
> Most parents would like to work with the schools to benefit their children. Low parent turnout for school meetings and events does not necessarily mean that parents do not care about working with schools. Factors such as discomfort in dealing with professional educators, other family and job-related responsibilities, and language barriers play a far larger role than lack of interest.

The overriding message is that most parents want to work with schools. We know, however, that many are unable to come to their children's school because of work schedules and other obstacles. Our challenge as educators is to look for ways to work with parents without requiring their presence at the school itself. In the next activity, we'll look at seven characteristics of successful home learning environments that apply to diverse families. This will provide us with a framework for thinking about how we as educators can help strengthen home learning environments, especially for those families who are unable to work with the school in more traditional ways that involve their actual presence at school. ***Allow 8 min.***

Activity #3: Successful Home Learning Environments for Children from Kindergarten to 6th Grade

Objectives: The participants will become familiar with the components of strong home learning environments.

Recommended Time: 25 minutes

Directions and Procedure:

1. Begin by stating that you'll be exploring the characteristics of home learning that seem to be most closely associated with children's achievement in school. These characteristics can be attained by all kinds of families -- white and of color; rich and poor; one- and two-parent families; working and non-working families -- and can be developed by all kinds of parents, grandparents or other family members, regardless of educational level.

2. Divide participants into small groups and ask each group to select a recorder.

   a. Ask each group to consider the following task:

      You are the advisors to a study on home learning environments. The researchers have asked you to list what you think are the most important characteristics of a successful home-learning environments, one that supports student achievement, List no more than 5 characteristics that are all possible regardless of income level. ***Allow 5 minutes***

   b. Ask the group recorders in a round-robin fashion, to list ONE characteristic their group identified. Go around the room one more time if necessary, to cover all ideas generated. Write the ideas on chart paper and post. ***Allow 5 min.***

3. State to participants that you would like to review a list of characteristics of successful home-learning environments compiled from research and ask them to think about how this compares to their lists as you present the information.

   Explain that this list of characteristics draws on a large body of research, but there is no "definitive list." It reflects those qualities that appear frequently in the research. The purpose of this exercise is not to develop a complete set of categories, but to generate thoughtful discussion.

   Add that these points are intended to help educators recognize and reinforce family characteristics associated with high achievement. **Educators are NOT expected to teach or lecture parents about how to be more effective, but rather to create situations where parents can work together with educators to strengthen home learning.**

Show *T-9* but present each of the seven characteristics, one at a time, using a sheet of paper as a sliding overlay. As you present each characteristic, relate it to the ideas the group generated earlier. It is important that participants feel their contributions were useful. You may also choose to use some of the examples provided in the following text.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESSFUL HOME LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

1. Establishing A Daily Family Routine

Examples:

- providing time, space, quiet, and materials for child's studying, reading, and hobbies;
- assigning chores and household tasks;
- being firm about regular bedtime

2. Monitoring Out-of-School Activities

Examples:

- setting limits on television use, in both the amount of time permitted each day and the type of programs to be watched;
- calling on other family members or neighbors to watch or check up on children while parents are not at home;
- calling home each afternoon at a specified time to check on child, if parent is at work

NOTE TO PRESENTER: Remind participants of ***Handout #6***, "Guidelines for Family Television Viewing," in the Participant Workbook.

3. Modeling the Value of Learning and Hard Work

Examples:

- establishing a family communication style that values learning by inviting questioning, discussion, and explanation;
- demonstrating that hard work is necessary to achievement, such as by engaging in a family improvement project with visible results;
- using reference materials (e.g. dictionary, Almanac) at home or in the library to answer questions in more depth or for enjoyment

4. Expressing High but Realistic Expectations for Achievement

Examples:

- setting goals and standards for child's conduct that are appropriate for their age and level of maturity; urging child to work hard in school;
- recognizing and encouraging a child's special talents;
- letting family members, friends, and neighbors know when a child is successful in school and voicing expectations for continued achievement

5. Encouraging Child's Overall Development and Progress in School

Examples:

- cultivating a warm and supporting home atmosphere;
- rewarding success and applying sanctions appropriately and consistently;
- showing interest in what the children are learning in school and the talents they are beginning to display;
- discussing regularly the value of a good education, possible career options, and necessary life skills

6. Reading, Writing and Discussions among Family Members

Examples:

- reading to children at a regular time and listening to children read;
- discussions of school day, family members lives, and current events;
- storytelling, recounting experiences, and sharing problem-solving strategies;
- writing of all kinds (grocery lists, telephone messages, letters, diary entries).

7. Using Community Resources for Family Needs

Examples:

- enrolling children in youth enrichment programs, such as after-school sports lessons, community learning programs, museums, or art lessons;
- introducing children to responsible mentors (coaches, counselors, friends, staffs of local organizations);
- staying in touch with children's teachers and other school staff such as counselors or social workers;
- being aware of and using community services for other family needs

Ask participants if they have any other comments about this list. In closing, remind participants that these characteristics of successful home learning activities can be found in all kinds of families, large or small, rich or poor, mainstream or culturally diverse, and can be developed by parents, grandparents, or other family members, regardless of educational level. However, some families may be faced with challenges that make the development and support of effective home learning environments more difficult. After the break, we will discuss how schools can help support successful home learning environments.

Call attention to the fuller discussion of each characteristic in *Handout #5* including developmental considerations - that parent actions need to change as children get older.

Break (10 minutes)

Activity #4: How Schools Can Help Families Build More Successful Learning Environments

Objective: The participants will identify resources that schools can provide and strategies schools can use to help families build successful home learning environments.

Recommended Time: 35 minutes

Directions and Procedures:

1. Begin by stating although the characteristics of successful home learning activities can be found in all kinds of families, today's families face many challenges. Economic circumstances, family demands, ethnic and cultural differences in the United States all pose major challenges to families and communities as they try to build supportive and constructive home learning environments for their children. ***Allowing 5-6 minutes for this overview and using T -10*** briefly provide the following information to summarize these dominant influences are:

   Poverty
   Examples:
   - one in five children live in poverty (Childrens' Defense Fund, 1991)
   - the largest proportion of poor children live in cities (Bureau of the Census, 1992)
   - poverty affects all ethnic, cultural and racial groups

   Single parents and working mothers
   Examples:
   - one out of five children currently lives in a one-parent family
   - in 1990, 67% of the mothers with children under 18 were working (Bureau of the Census, 1990)
   - 63% of poor children were in female-headed families (Bureau of the Census, 1992)

   Immigration and Ethnic Diversity
   Examples:
   - more than 14 million immigrants came to the U.S. in the 1980's
   - 80% of new immigrants came from Latin America and Asia
   - by the year 2000, 1 out of three Americans will be of non-European origin (all from Hodgkinson, 1989)

   State that in the next activity you will be asking small groups to consider the challenges these conditions pose for families in relation to their children's learning.

2. Ask participants to number off, 1-7, to form 7 small groups; then project T-9, "Characteristics of Successful Home Learning Environments," on the screen. Instruct each small group to work with the characteristic that matches their group number.

The small group task is to generate 5-6 **obstacles** families in their school might encounter, then to identify **strategies** and **resources** that their school and teachers can use to help families, particularly those facing obstacles, build a successful home learning environment. Obstacles for families might include conditions stemming from low income, single parenthood, both parents working and/or ethnic and cultural differences. Although participants should be encouraged to draw upon their experience as they complete this activity, they can also use the ***Handout Readings,*** "Improving the School-Home Connection for Low-Income Urban Parents" and "A Closer Look at Children in Single-parent Families."

Provide each group with a felt tip pen and flip chart paper, and tell them to assign a recorder to write down group's ideas for reporting out. Request that recorders write large enough for viewing by whole group. ***Allocate 15 minutes for this assignment.***

To get groups started, or to contribute to the discussion, call the attention of the group to the ideas in ***Handout #7***.

3. Facilitate reporting out and large group sharing. Ask recorders/reporters to post products at designated spots on wall around room, and allow small groups to move, in turn, from the 1st through the 7th stations. To vary this activity, you might ask each participant to "vote," by placing a hashmark beside the #1 strategy in each category that seems most exemplary. At the culmination of the viewing, you could highlight the strategies receiving the "most votes" in each category.

   If time is short, facilitate fast-paced reporting out by each of the 7 recorder/reporters. In this event, take care that reporters keep their remarks to one minute or less. ***Allocate 7-10 minutes for this sharing.***

4. Bring closure to this activity by making the point that when schools help parents develop home learning activities:

   - Children see continuity between home and school.
   - Parents learn new ways to interact with children.
   - Parents are kept informed about what is being taught at school.
   - Parents and teachers collaborate for the benefit of the child.

   Note that supports from schools and teachers will be explored in more depth in the following workshops. This exercise was meant to encourage participants to begin seeking new ways to help parents.

Activity #5: Summary

Objective: The participants will reflect upon their learnings in this workshop, and commit to completing assigned activities prior to Workshop 2 on Communication Skills and Strategies.

Recommended Time: 10 minutes

Directions and Procedures:

1. Conclude this workshop by summarizing the following points:

    Use T-2 "Building School-Family Partnerships for Learning" on the screen and review for participants the purpose and content of the workshop series by saying:

    > The goal of this workshop series is to help teachers and administrators work more effectively with all parents to strengthen home learning environments that promote student achievement.
    >
    > This sourcebook takes the position that in order to strengthen home learning, schools and families need to work together as equal partners.

    This first workshop presented an overview both of the characteristics of home learning environments that promote student achievement, and the types of constraints and challenges faced by families as they develop and maintain these environments. But, knowing what families can do to promote home learning environments is just part of the picture. The other important part is what **SCHOOLS** can do to support families in their efforts. The last activity opened the door to exploring some strategies educators can use in supporting home learning environments. Please reflect on the objectives of this workshop and the extent to which you feel you have achieved each. ***Project T-4, "Learner Objectives" on the screen, and allow 3-5 minutes for participant comment and reflection.***

    Mention also that during the balance of this workshop series, we will focus more specifically on the types of programs, activities, and practices that schools engage in to promote (or hinder) the development of home-school partnerships and to support (or neglect) home learning environments.

2. Call the attention of the participants to the following articles that are located in the Appendix:

    > Siobhan Nicolau, "*Schools Helping Poor Hispanic Parents Strengthen Home Learning*"
    >
    > Theresa Perry, *The African American Experience*"

Sau-Fong Sui, *"The Chinese-American Experience"*

John Tsuchida, *"Southeast Asians"*

Nitza Hildago, *"The Puerto Rican Experience"*

Participants may wish to review these articles to learn more about the diversity of different cultures. For example, Nicolau highlights the unique traits of Hispanic parents that are linked to their cultural norms and values and illustrates how the behaviors which grow out of these traits are sometimes misinterpreted. She also outlines specific strategies that schools can use to work with Hispanic parents in strengthening home learning environment for Hispanic children.

3. Identify the next workshop you will be presenting in the series and remind participants of the overall schedule. Thank them for their participation.

FAMILIES AS LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Transparencies

T-1	Key Concept
T-2	Building School-Family Partnerships for Learning: Workshops for Urban Educators
T-3	Key Terms
T-4	Learner Objectives
T-5	Benefits of Parent Involvement for Students
T-6	Benefits of Parent Involvement for Parents
T-7	Benefits of Parent Involvement for Teachers and Schools
T-8	Strengths of Families
T-9	Characteristics of Successful Home Learning Environments
T-10	Conditions Posing Challenges for Families

KEY CONCEPT

Every family functions as a home learning environment, regardless of its structure, economic level, ethnic or cultural background.

Consequently, every family has the potential to support and improve the academic achievement of its children.

BUILDING SCHOOL-FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS FOR LEARNING

Workshop 1: Families as Learning Environments

Workshop 2: Communication Skills and Strategies

Workshop 3: Homework and Home Learning Activities

Workshop 4: School Programs and Practices

Workshop 5: School District Policies and Supports (designed for those developing and revising policies on school-family partnerships)

KEY TERMS

SCHOOL-FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS

- Mutual trust and respect
- Two-way collaboration and support
- Equality in the relationship
- Schools take the initiative
- Activities for student success

HOME LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Homework
- Home learning activities suggested by teachers
- Home learning activities initiated by families

LEARNER OBJECTIVES

- Explain the connection between the home learning environment and student achievement.
- Recognize the strengths inherent in families.
- Identify the components of strong home learning environments.
- Recognize obstacles to building strong home learning environments and the resources schools can provide.

BENEFITS OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT FOR STUDENTS

- More positive attitudes toward school;
- Higher achievement in reading;
- Higher quality and more grade appropriate homework;
- Completion of more homework on weekends;
- Observing more similarities between family and school.

(Epstein, 1991)

BENEFITS OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT FOR PARENTS

- Receive ideas from school on how to help children
- Learn more about educational program and how the school works
- Become more supportive of children
- Become more confident about ways to help children learn
- More positive views of teachers

(Epstein, 1992; Henderson, 1987; Liontos, 1992)

BENEFITS OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT FOR TEACHERS AND SCHOOLS

- Teacher morale improves
- Parents rate teachers higher
- Teachers rate parents as more helpful
- Student achievement improves
- Parents support schools and bond issues

(Davies, 1988; Epstein, 1992; Liontos, 1992)

STRENGTHS OF FAMILIES

- As first teachers, parents have opportunities to model and guide.
- Parents know their children better than anyone else does.
- Parents are interested in their children's education and want them to succeed.
- Most parents want to work with schools to benefit their children.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESSFUL HOME LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

1. Establishing a daily family routine
2. Monitoring out-of-school activities
3. Modeling the value of learning and hard work
4. Encouraging child's overall development and progress in school
5. Expressing high but realistic expectations for achievement
6. Reading, writing and discussions among family members
7. Using community resources for family needs

CONDITIONS POSING CHALLENGES FOR FAMILIES

POVERTY

SINGLE PARENTS AND WORKING MOTHERS

IMMIGRATION AND ETHNIC DIVERSITY

Building School-family Partnerships for Learning: Workshops for Urban Educators

Families as Learning Environments

Participant Handouts

Handouts:

1. Overview: Key Concept, Rationale, and Learner Objectives
2. Key Terms and Definitions
3. Benefits of Parent Involvement
4. Strengths of Families
5. Characteristics of Successful Home Learning Environments
6. Guidelines for Family Television Viewing
7. School and Teacher Strategies to Help Parents Develop Successful Home Learning Environments

Readings for Use during Workshop:

1. "Improving the School-home Connection for Low-income Urban Parents"
2. "A Closer Look at Children in Single-parent Families"

Readings/Resources for Further Study

References

OVERVIEW

KEY CONCEPT:

Every family functions as a home learning environment, regardless of its structure, economic level, or ethnic or cultural background. Consequently, every family has the potential to support and improve the academic achievement of its children.

RATIONALE AND PURPOSE:

Our country has always had a dynamic demographic history, but the changes in families over the last twenty years have been dramatic. These changes include more single parents and working mothers, more children living in poverty, and more immigrant families especially from Latin America and Asia. The schools are attempting to work with such families, but schools must come to know and understand better the diverse family backgrounds of their students before they can reach them effectively.

The purpose of this workshop is to explore how schools can support diverse urban families in developing strong home learning environments, thereby enhancing the potential of their children to succeed in school.

LEARNER OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this workshop, the participants will be able to:

1. Understand the connection between the home learning environment and student achievement

2. Recognize the strengths inherent in families

3. Identify the components of strong home learning environments that cut across diverse family structures, economic levels, and ethnic or cultural backgrounds, and that adapt to the changing needs of children as they develop from kindergarten through 6th grade

4. Recognize obstacles to building strong home learning environments and the resources schools can provide to help families.

KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

SCHOOL-FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS. The sustained mutual collaboration, support, and participation of school staffs and families at home or at the school site in activities and efforts that directly and positively affect the success of children's learning and progress in school. The partners need to be treated as equals because both parents and educators contribute in major ways to the education of young people. To succeed the partnership must be based upon mutual trust and respect with educators taking the lead to develop and nurture these key ingredients to effective collaboration.

FAMILY STRENGTHS. Refers to a cluster of factors found in all families that can be tapped by schools seeking to build effective home-school partnerships. Included among these are: (1) the intimate knowledge parents have of their children's needs and talents; (2) the keen interest parents have in their children's schooling and future; (3) the desire to work with the schools for their children's benefit; (4) parents are the first and most enduring teacher of children; and (5) parents have vast opportunities to teach, model and guide their children. These factors are well-documented in various studies (Chavkin, 1989; Gotts & Purnell, 1987; Harris et al., 1987; Lareau, 1987; Snow, 1982) and in the experience of program developers (Henderson, Marburger, & Ooms, 1986; Lueder, 1989; Rich, 1988);

HOME LEARNING ENVIRONMENT. The context within which home learning activities and home learning take place. Research has shown a number of characteristics of home learning environments that are successful in promoting children's success in school. For the purposes of these workshops, seven characteristics of successful home learning environments are discussed: (1) establishing a daily family routine; (2) monitoring out-of-school activities; (3) modeling the value of learning and hard work; (4) expressing high, but realistic, expectations; (5) encouraging child's overall development and progress in school; (6) reading, writing, and discussions among family members; and (7) using community resources for family needs. (See Families Workshop: Activity #3)

HOME LEARNING ACTIVITIES. All the ways that learning is fostered at home with and without encouragement from schools. For present purposes we are most interested in those ways that schools can influence home learning. These activities fall into three broad categories: (1) homework, which is an extension of class learning, and primarily meant for students to complete outside the classroom on their own; (2) home learning suggestions given by the teacher in which the parent or another family member is meant to be active partner; and (3) family initiated home learning activities such as leisure reading, family discussions, trips, religious and cultural activities, and games in which parents are likely to be actively involved with children.

BENEFITS OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT

BENEFITS OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT FOR STUDENTS

- More positive attitudes toward school
- Higher achievement in reading
- Higher quality and more grade appropriate homework
- Completion of more homework on weekends
- Observing more similarities between family and schools

BENEFITS OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT FOR PARENTS

- Receive ideas from school on how to help children
- Learn more about educational program and how the school works
- Become more supportive of children
- Become more confident about ways to help children learn
- More positive views of teachers

(Epstein, 1992; Henderson, 1987; Liontos, 1992)

BENEFITS OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT FOR TEACHERS AND SCHOOLS

- Teacher morale improves
- Parents rate teachers higher
- Teachers rate parents as more helpful
- Student achievement improves
- Parents support schools and bond issues

(Davies, 1988; Epstein, 1992; Liontos, 1992)

STRENGTHS OF FAMILIES

- **As their children's first and most important teachers, parents have vast opportunities to teach, serve as role models, and guide their children as they enter society.** Parents have known their children since birth and have a closer relationship with them than they have with anyone else. Parents are also with their own children in more settings and situations than anyone else. They have greater opportunities to teach directly, set an example for study and learning, observe their children's activities and behavior, and guide their development.

- **Parents have intimate knowledge of their children's needs, skills, and interests; they know their children better than anyone else does.** From their lifelong, close relationship, parents have a unique knowledge of their children. Even though educators may have specialized knowledge of how to identify skills, needs, and interests, teachers see children for only a year or more. The knowledge and insights parents have of their children can be an important resource for teachers in understanding how to motivate a child or handle difficulty.

- **Parents have a keen interest in their children's education and want their children to be successful.** Increasingly parents, especially low-income, minority parents, are reputed to show little interest and support for school. But parents themselves tell a different story. Program developers and evaluators with broad experience have found that all kinds of parents are very interested in their children's education (Moles, 1993). For example, in a southwestern regional survey, 95 percent of black and Hispanic parents said they should be sure their elementary school children do their homework and they want to spend time helping them get the best education (Chavkin, 1989). A 1990 national survey concluded that "parents care deeply about their children's education." (*Newsweek).* Still, many are often unable to commit to spending time with teachers and in the school, and many are intimidated by school settings, having had an unsuccessful school experience themselves.

- **Most parents would like to work with the schools to benefit their children.** Low parent turnout for school meetings and events does not necessarily mean that parents do not care about working with schools. Factors such as discomfort in dealing with professional edcucators, other family and job related responsibilities, and language barriers, play a far larger role than lack of interest. In a Maryland survey, 85 percent of elementary school parents said they spend a quarter hour or more an evening helping their children when teachers request it, and were willing to spend even more time if asked (Epstein, 1986). In the southwest survey, low-income parents were as interested as higher income parents in beling involved in evaluating their child's progress, selecting methods of clasroom discipline, and deciding how much homework is assigned (Chavkin and Williams, 1989).

CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESSFUL HOME LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

1. Establishing A Daily Family Routine

Children need regularity and consistency in their lives. Clark (1988) cites individual, in-depth studies of achieving and underachieving twelfth-grade African-American youngsters in Chicago, and culturally diverse fourth-grade youngsters in Los Angeles, which indicate that children who are academically successful tend to come from families who engage in a regular routine of activities.

Examples:

- Providing time, space, quiet, and materials for child's studying, reading, and hobbies
- Assigning chores and household tasks
- Encouraging good health habits - proper balance of rest and activity, regular breakfast and dinner schedules, good nutrition, health care as needed
- Eating meals together
- Being firm about regular bedtime

Developmental considerations: As children grow older, parents should gradually allow them to take increasing responsibility for studying and completing homework, performing household chores, and engaging in good health practices. The goal is to encourage children to be self-reliant while at the same time providing structure and rules.

2. Monitoring Out-of-School Activities

Once children are in school, they still spend 70% of their waking hours (including weekends and vacations) outside the school setting (Clark, 1990). This time represents a tremendous learning opportunity which schools and families need to recognize and develop for the student's advantage. Even when out of their parents' view, children can be guided and monitored, particularly by keeping track of the proportion of time that is spent in constructive activity.

Examples:

- Guiding the use of leisure time, so that it is spent in constructive out-of-school activities
- Setting clear rules and standards about appropriate activities

- Setting limits on television use, in both the amount of time permitted each day and the type of programs to be watched

- Calling on other family members or neighbors to watch or check up on children while parents are not at home.

- Calling home each afternoon at a specfied time to check on child, if parent is at work.

Developmental considerations: As children advance through the school system, they should be allowed more choice in out-of-school activities such as art, music, sports, etc. These activities allow children to pursue their interests and to experience social interactions with peers. Parents need opportunities to get to know their children's friends, as the peer group will become an increasingly important influence on behaviors and attitudes. Monitoring of television viewing should include discussions of programs watched; such discussions could enhance children's critical thinking skils, foster positive parent-child interactions, and increase parents' knowledge regarding the appropriateness of various programs. (See also Activity Sheet 6. Guidelines for Family Television Viewing.)

3. Modeling the Value of Learning and Hard Work

Children learn a tremendous amount by observing and imitating the behavior of others, particularly family members and other adults. Students who value education and understand the connection between success and hard work tend to do better in school (Mayeske, 1973). These values are powerfully influenced by the home environment, but parents need to do more than talk about them. A traditional homily applies here: "However hard we may preach, it is by example that we teach."

Examples:

- Setting an example by reading, writing, and engaging in other learning activities at home

- Using family leisure time productively, such as playing games together where parents demonstrate that planning ahead and problem solving, rather than pure luck, produce success (e.g. Scrabble, Monopoly, Dominoes)

- Establishing a family communication style that values learning by inviting questioning, discussion, and explanation

- Demonstrating that hard work is necessary to achievement, such as by engaging in a family improvement project with visible results

Using reference materials (e.g. dictionary, almanac) at home or in the library to answer questions in more depth or for enjoyment

- Volunteering to help at school on a regular basis

Developmental considerations: As children grow older, they are exposed to other adults, peers, and media figures who may model behavior inconsistent with parental behavior. Older children are not as passive in the process of modeling; they may make a conscious choice to imitate specific individuals other than parents. To guide their children, parents need to model the behavior they hope to instill in their children. Maintaining positive relationships with children also increases the likelihood that children will turn to parents as models. As much as possible, children should be surrounded by other adults and peers who are positive role models.

4. Expressing High but Realistic Expectations for Achievement

Parent expectations for achievement definitely have an influence on the child. Parents who make it clear from an early age that their children should plan on higher education, for example, tend to have children who go on to college. This is not to say that parent expectations should be unrealistically high. Studies have found that realistic or accurate parental expectations (i.e. close to the child's actual performance, rather than too high or low) are associated with high performance on cognitive tasks (Scott-Jones, 1984).

Examples:

- Setting goals and standards for child's conduct that are appropriate for their age and level of maturity
- Urging child to work hard in school
- Encouraging effort for long-term gains vs. short-term benefits
- Recognizing and encouraging a child's special talents
- Communicating parents' high expectations for a student's achievement to teachers and asking for suggestions on how to reinforce that message.
- Letting family members, friends, and neighbors know when a child is successful in school and voicing expectations for continued achievement.

Developmental considerations: As children grow older, they become increasingly aware of others' expectations of them--teachers and peers as well as parents. Older children engage in social comparison; they decide whether they are better or worse than their age-mates on a variety of dimensions, including academic performance. In conveying expectations, it is best to use the child's own past performance, not that of siblings or peers, as a baseline. In general, parents should encourage children to set performance goals that are high, but attainable.

5. Encouraging Child's Overall Development and Progress in School

Children should be treated as winners. Even when children make mistakes, they are not made to feel like losers. Parents (and teachers) who provide frequent verbal support, praising children's skills and efforts, telling them they love and care about them, and using endearing rather than derogatory nicknames, tend to have children with higher self-esteem, who consequently do better in school (Clark,1990).

Examples:

- Cultivating a warm and supporting home atmosphere
- Affirming personal worth through positive labeling and appreciation of the child as a winner
- Rewarding success and applying sanctions appropriately and consistently
- Showing interest in what children are learning in school and the talents they are beginning to display
- Expressing affection and approval
- Discussing regularly the value of a good education, possible career options, and necessary life skills
- Noticing and rewarding achievement in school
- Posting children's work on the wall or refrigerator and sending children's poems, artwork, and stories to other family members and friends
- Asking teacher(s) for home learning activities and homework

Developmental considerations: As children grow older, direct physical expressions of affection and approval between parent and child may not occur as frequently. In addition, older children may sometimes judge themselves harshly and assume that parents also have the same negative opinion of them. Children need a constant level of affection and approval, even though hugs and kisses may not be as frequent as in the past. When the child's behavior and performance are not in keeping with parents' expectations, specific feedback regarding how to change or improve, delivered in a positive manner, is more effective than a punitive or derogatory response.

6. Reading, Writing and Discussions among Family Members

A wealth of studies shows that home learning activities such as reading aloud, and frequent, open family discussions are associated with improved student achievement (Epstein, 1991;

Leler, 1983; Singer et al., 1988). In a study of 1900 elementary children in London, Tizard and colleagues (1982) found that when schools encouraged children to practice reading at home with parents, they made highly significant gains in reading achievement at school compared to children who practiced only at school with teachers.

Examples:

- Reading to children at a regular time and listening to children read
- Discussions of school day, family members' lives, and current events
- Storytelling, recounting experiences, and sharing problem-solving strategies
- Writing of all kinds (grocery lists, telephone messages, letters, diary entries)
- Using everyday experiences to teach
- Using household activites to teach skills such as counting, sorting, reading, and following instructions (e.g. following a recipe to bake a cake)
- Watching a favorite TV program together and discussing it afterwards

Developmental considerations: As children grow older, parents will spend less time reading aloud and more time listening to the child read, engaging in conversation, and asking questions that require thoughtful answers. Conversations are two-way, and involve listening to children's opinions as well as expressing the adult point of view. Because the peer group increasingly provides opportunities for children to express themselves, parents may lose a powerful connection with their children unless they provide an "ear" and try to understand children's ideas and beliefs.

7. Using Community Resources

As children increasingly plan and develop their own leisure time, parents need to steer them to other adults who can provide guidance, skills, and mentoring. Although these activities occur outside the home, they are, in effect, an extension of the home in that they are "brokered" by parents and serve as a part of the family's overall strategy to create a productive learning environment for their children.

Parents also need to be in close touch with their children's teachers and other school staff, to obtain information about how they might help reinforce at home what the child is learning, and what programs or services, such as tutoring or clubs, are available. Similarly, parents need to be informed about community services and resources that can offer support for families, such as health clinics, employment and training programs, and other human service agencies. Filling basic needs through such supports may be essential before parents are able to fully help their children.

In his studies of achieving ten and eighteen year-olds, Clark (1990) has found that both groups of youth were connected to activities, programs, and relationships that provide opportunities to mediate potentially harmful life conditions. Children need direct and continuing access to people with whom they can develop healthy, helping relationships. For students to be successfully connected to a variety of such mentors, their parents need to help identify and introduce them.

Examples:

- Exposing children to cultural activities (library and museum visits, movies, and organized participatory sports)
- Enrolling children in youth enrichment programs, such as after-school sports or lessons, community learning programs, museums, or art lessons
- Introducing children to responsible mentors (coaches, counselors, friends, staffs of local organizations)
- Staying in touch with child's teachers and other school staff such as counselors or social workers
- Being aware of and using community services for family needs
  - Employment and training programs
  - Medical and mental health facilities
  - Human service agencies (housing, recreation, income maintenance)
- Visiting children's school and asking teachers how to help children do better in school
- Participating in religious services and youth groups

Developmental considerations: As children grow older, they increasingly plan and develop their own leisure time activities. Parents need to steer children to other adults whose guidance, skills, and mentoring will support parents' efforts. Appropriate use of community resources, such as the health care system, employment services, and other human service agencies, will help older children learn to negotiate the social system. Parents can also help older children contribute to the community through activities in community centers, churches, and at school.

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Handout #6

ERIC Digest

EDO-PS-90-3

Guidelines for Family Television Viewing

Children in the U.S. view an average of 3-5 hours of television daily. It is difficult to document effects of such extensive television exposure on children. However, research indicates that television viewing may be linked to violent or aggressive behavior, obesity, poor academic performance, precocious sexuality, and the use of drugs or alcohol. Thus, it is important that parents help their children use television as a positive, creative force, and help them avoid television's negative influences.

Aspects of Viewing

1. *Time spent watching television.* When children spend 3-5 hours a day watching television, time for other activities is severely limited. Childhood is a period of growth and development, when children need to play, alone and with other children. Children need to read and talk with other children and adults.

2. *Violence on television.* The amount of violence on television is increasing. A recent report from the National Institute of Mental Health indicates that television violence can be harmful to young children. Children can become frightened, worried or suspicious from watching violence on TV. Researchers have also found that children who watch many violent programs tend to be more aggressive than other children on the playground and in class. Parents should realize that viewing violent programs may encourage their children's tendency toward aggression. Parents also need to keep in mind that television often portrays sexual behavior and the use of alcohol or drugs in realistic or inviting terms.

3. *TV and learning.* Many recent studies indicate that excessive television viewing may have a detrimental effect on learning and school performance. The hours spent viewing television interfere with homework and limit the time available for other ways of learning. If a child is not performing well academically, television watching may be a strong factor contributing to the problem.

4. *Commercials.* The average child sees more than 20,000 commercials a year. Advertisers spend roughly $700 million annually to make sure that their sales pitches reach large numbers of children. The majority of food advertising is for heavily sugared products such as candy and presweetened cereal. Commercials for meat, milk products, bread, and juice make up only about 4% of the food ads shown during children's viewing time. This emphasis can give children a distorted picture of how they ought to eat. A recent study found a direct relationship between amount of television viewing and children's risk of obesity.

Guidelines for Parents

Here are some ideas that will help parents guide their children's TV viewing:

1. *Set limits.* Know how many hours of television your children watch. Limit your children's viewing to one or two hours per day. Don't be afraid to reduce the amount of television your children watch. Your children probably won't like being kept away from the television set. Television is seductive. The programs your children watch are apt to be filled with commercials promoting other programs. The word-of-mouth campaign that goes on in playgrounds and school cafeterias is powerful and pervasive. But establishing good habits for your children is worth the effort. Television watching is often more habit than choice.

Don't be surprised if your children go through a sort of withdrawal when the television time is reduced. You can ease the transition by encouraging alternative activities such as sports, games, chores, reading, conversation, or hobbies. You can help by joining your children in these activities. Because children model their behavior after their parents' example, an examination of your own television viewing habits may also help. Be a good model yourself.

Eliminate some TV watching by setting a few basic rules, such as no television during meals, or before household tasks or homework are completed.

2. *Plan.* Encourage children to plan their viewing by using a *TV Guide* or newspaper listing rather than flipping the channels to decide what to watch. The set should go on only for specific programs, and it should go off when they are over. Approach a television program as you would a movie. Help children decide which show to see, and talk about the show after it ends. Select programs that feature children in your child's age range. Try to balance action, comedy, fine arts, and sports.

Don't reward or withhold television in order to punish. Such practices make television seem even more important.

3. *Participate.* Know what your children watch on television. Watch with them and talk about the programs. TV programs may help you discuss difficult topics such as sex and war. Follow up interesting programs with library books. Explain situations that are confusing. Ask the child about his or her responses to the program when it is over. Discuss the difference between fantasy and reality. The worst program may be a good experience for your children if you are there to help them get the right message, while the best program may be wasted without your encouragement to think, evaluate, and question.

Parents who watch television with their children will be able to point out that violence on television is not real, and that the actor has not actually been killed or maimed. Parents can also show disapproval of the violent episodes and stress that such behavior is not the best way to resolve a problem. By discussing the violence shown on television, parents can lessen its impact.

The best solution, of course, is for parents to eliminate the most violent programs from their children's schedule. Remember that lock-out devices will ensure that certain channels cannot be seen. If you are offended by certain programs and intend to forbid your children to watch them, try to communicate your reasons. If your children are watching a program, and you see behavior to which you object, tell them so, and explain your objection.

The Center for Early Education and Development's publication *How Can I Guide My Child's TV Viewing?* lists psychologist John Murray's recommendations for actions parents can take to deal with violent programs:

- Watch at least one episode of each program your child watches so you know how violent it is.
- When you are viewing together, discuss the violence with your child. Talk about why the violence happened and how painful it was. Ask your child for ideas about how the conflict could have been resolved without violence.
- Explain to your child how violence on entertainment programs is faked and what might happen if other people casually tried these same stunts.
- Encourage your child to watch programs with characters who cooperate and care for each other. Such programs have been shown to influence children in positive ways.

4. *Resist commercials.* Don't expect your children to resist commercials for candy and snack foods without help from you. The ability to see through a sales pitch is learned fairly late and with difficulty. Poor eating habits can be picked up early and with ease. Advertisers have market researchers, writers, producers, and saturation campaigns with big budgets on their side. When your children request foods and toys advertised on television, teach them that television makes them want things they don't necessarily need and that may even be harmful. Help the child analyze commercials. Note the exaggerated claims, and the fact that the makers of the product pay for advertising.

5. *Express your views.* The most effective way to change commercials or programs is to call your local television station. When you are offended or pleased by something on television, let the station manager know. Write or call the network or the program's sponsor. Stations, networks, and sponsors are all concerned about the effects of television on children and are responsive to parents' concerns. Be specific. Don't call or write just to complain. It is also important to voice your approval. Programs you like may not have high ratings, and your support may help keep them on the air.

If you feel a commercial is inaccurate or misleading, write down the name of the product, the channel, the time you saw the commercial, and a brief description of your concern. Then call your local Better Business Bureau with this information, or send it to the Children's Advertising Review Unit, Council of Better Business Bureaus, Inc., 845 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10022.

6. *Get help.* Action for Children's Television (ACT, 20 University Road, Cambridge, MA 02138) has been a leading public interest group.

This ERIC Digest was adapted from two publications:

How Can I Guide My Child's TV Viewing? from the Center for Early Education and Development of the University of Minnesota, and

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For More Information

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This publication was funded by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education. Opinions expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of OERI.

SCHOOL AND TEACHER STRATEGIES TO HELP PARENTS DEVELOP SUCCESSFUL HOME LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Directions:
Read the items under each characteristic. Then, list additional suggestions for ways teachers could help parents strengthen each characteristic.

1. Establishing a Daily Family Routine

* Regular homework policy - same amount of time each night
* Be consistent in assigning homework - have a routine.
* Regular advance notice home of class/school activities
* Friday Folder - send schoolwork home same day every week

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2. Monitoring Out-Of-School Activities

* Enrichment activities before and after school - inform parents
* Guidelines for constructive use of television - send home flyers or newsletters

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3. Modeling the Value of Learning and Hard Work

* Suggest or send home educational activities for whole family
* Set up a school reference library families can use

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4. Expressing High but Realistic Expectations for Achievement

* Reward improved achievement
* Recognition events for all children, not just those who are bright or well behaved.
* College/career information

* ______________________________

5. Encouraging Child's Overall Development and Progress in School

* Information on curriculum
* Opportunities to get to know principal, teachers
* Have a workshop on "Building Your Child's Self-Esteem".
* "Happygrams" or positive post cards for achievement
* Provide weekly information reports on student work which parents sign and return with the child.

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6. Reading, Writing and Discussions among Family Members

* Give a demonstration on how to read with your child.
* Send home examples of games that encourage children to listen carefully.
* Give parents packets of materials to take home and start home libraries.
* Have students interview their parents and/or gradparents about how life has changed since their childhood. Compile interviews into a "Family Memory Book."
* Lend families books their kids like

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7. Using Community Resources

* Hand out directory of community services and places to visit
* Be alert to family needs in conversations and suggest contacting specific local agencies
* Give parents suggestions for summer activities such as packets of learning materials.
* Suggest nearby individuals and organizations that can provide guidance and skills training to realize the potential of children

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ERIC
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DIGEST

Number 41, March 1988

ISSN 0889 8049

IMPROVING THE SCHOOL-HOME CONNECTION FOR LOW-INCOME URBAN PARENTS

The importance of a child's home, and parent participation in school activities, to learning is undisputed. Therefore, it is unfortunate that the poor achievement of low-income urban students has often coexisted with a perceived lack of parent interest in schooling, creating a tendency to lift the burden of these children's academic failure from the schools by blaming their parents' lack of involvement in education. In fact, conversely, low-income parents can and want to help with their children's schooling—both at home and at school. Thus, teachers and other school staff need reach out to parents in ways they can respond to, and help them help their children.

The Low-Income Urban Parent

Poverty weighs most heavily on urban children. Most of these poor urban children live in the growing number of single parent, female-headed households, where low wages and unemployment make life an increasing economic battle. Among blacks and Hispanics living in poor urban neighborhoods, the proportion of female-headed families is particularly high.

Even when a man is present in the household, families are increasingly comprised of children with more than one parental relationship. Since many mothers of school-age children are in the work force, not only stepmothers, but custodial mothers, and a variety of paid helpers, are all part of the complicated and imperfect patchwork of childcare.

School-Based Activities and Single and Working Parents

Research suggests that the more parents participate in schooling, in a sustained way, at every level—in advocacy, decision-making and oversight roles, as fundraisers and boosters, as volunteers and paraprofessionals, and as home teachers—the better for student achievement (Gordon, 1978). However, given the pressures of daily life on urban parents, a number of questions are raised about whether schools can engage poor, single, or working parents, who may be busier or have more troubled households than middle-class parents.

Understandably, educators, whose own time and resources are limited, are wary about expending insufficient effort in generating parent involvement. Yet, school personnel tend to decide in advance that single and working parents cannot be approached or relied on (Epstein, 1984, March). Though there may be a vast distance between parents' worry or concern and their actually reaching out, single working parents as well as dual working parent families are especially likely to want more contact and consultation with teachers, and they are as dissatisfied as the teachers about any loss of contact (The Metropolitan Life Survey, 1987).

In both dual working parent and single working parent families, parents' involvement in school activities is usually partly related to the flexibility of leave policies on their jobs. While most employers are still rigid about the time and hours they demand of their workers, they can be encouraged to allow flextime for working parents, and to extend short leaves beyond emergencies, so that parents can observe their children in the classroom or attend meetings (Espinosa, R., 1985). Where a corporation employs a large number of parents, times can actually be arranged with the employer for parent-teacher conferences and school meetings. These employer-school collaborations humanize the work place, increasing productivity along with employee morale as they make clear the employer's commitment to the next generation of workers.

Improving School-Based Participation

To generate better communication between schools and single and working parents, schools can be encouraged to move in a number of directions (Rich, 1985):

- be sensitive to parents' scheduling difficulties, and announce meetings and other events long enough in advance for parents to arrange for time off from work;
- create a more accepting environment for working and single parents, as well as those undergoing separation, divorce, or remarriage, or acting as a custodial parent;
- schedule teacher-parent-counselor evening meetings, with childcare;
- allow open-enrollment so that children can attend schools near parents' work places;
- provide before-school and after-school care;
- be careful about cancelling school at the last minute because of weather conditions, and leaving working parents with no resources for the care of their children;
- facilitate teen, single, working, and custodial parent peer support groups;
- provide both legal and custodial parents with regular information on their child's classroom activities, and any assistance they may need to become involved with the child's learning.

Home-Based Learning and Single and Working Parents

When parents' time for school involvement is limited, home-based learning is said to be one of the most efficient ways for parents to spend their time (Walbert, 1985). Nevertheless, teachers tend to favor parents who come to school, thus creating a cycle of positive reinforcement that leads to gains for those children whose parents come to school and shuts out parents (and their children) who are afraid or unable to do so (Toomey, 1986). Home-based learning breaks into this cycle and helps those who need help the most.

In fact, low-income single and working parents often *can* and *do* spend as much time helping their children at home as do middle-class parents with more education and leisure (Epstein, 1984, March). As with school-based involvement, it can be the teachers who hesitate to give these children work to take home, wrongly fearing that the parents will not be available to help. However,

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when teachers reach out to parents, these parents are generally more than willing to help. More impressive, when teachers *help parents to help their children*, these parents can be as effective with their children as those parents with more education and leisure, whom teachers expect to help their children (Epstein, 1984, April).

The Best Ways to Help Children at Home

Recent research on parental involvement in home learning differs about how the home and school should relate. While some researchers emphasize changing what goes on in the low-income or minority home in order to create learning situations that are more consistent with school learning (Walbert, 1984; Grau, Weinstein, & Walberg, 1983), others focus more on what can be done to increase teachers' understanding of the "natural" learning that goes on in any low-income home (Brice-Heath, 1983), or even to help these families help "empower" each other (Cochran, 1987). One author concludes that the "school-to-home pathway . . . is more likely to be effective if the two-way nature of the path is explicitly recognized by educators" (Cole & Griffin, 1987).

A first step in fostering home learning is letting parents know that there are simple, time-efficient ways to help their children. This can be done in a variety of ways (Rich, 1985):

- bilingual media campaign on the important role of the home in educating children;
- support for home learning from ministers and other respected leaders;
- family learning centers in schools, storefronts, and churches that offer help (bilingual, when necessary) to parents wanting to help their children learn;
- bilingual hot-lines for parents who need help in helping their children with their homework; and
- school-designed learning activities that parents and their children can do together.

Enhanced Schooling through Parent Involvement

Home-learning projects are critical for many low-income families who do not automatically give their children the assistance and stimulation necessary for success in school. Although both schools and parents must be inventive to increase parent involvement, it is important to keep in mind that every activity a child engages in can be enriching, and that the time children spend at home with their parents can be made as educational as the time they spend in school.

—Carol Ascher

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This Digest was developed by the ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education with funding from Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, under contract no. R188062013. The opinions expressed in this Digest do not necessarily reflect the position or policies of OERI or the Department of Education.

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ERIC/CUE Digest Number 23

June 1984

A Closer Look at Children in Single-Parent Families

For generations educators have assumed that children living with one parent have more trouble in school than children from two-parent families. As the number of single-parent families has grown, so has concern about the well being of their children. This concern has given rise to new research a well as to reexaminations of work conducted during the 1960s and 1970s. These new studies indicate that the situation is much more complex than originally thought. The experience of living in a single-parent home varies greatly according to a large number of factors. While statistics are helpful as at-risk indicators, day-to-day dealings with students should be guided by strong consideration of the particular circumstances of the individual child.

Profile of Single-Parent Families

Recent census figures and research data indicate the single-parent family is typically headed by a working mother, and in comparison to the two-parent family has fewer financial resources and tends to relocate more often (8, 9, 13).

Figures also show that the number of such families is burgeoning. The ranks of single-parent families swelled to more than 70% in the last decade, from 11% of all families in 1970 to 19% in 1979. Among black families the statistics are even more striking: nearly 45% of families are headed by one parent. Among white families, 14% are single-parent, and among Spanish-speaking families, 27% are single-parent. Overall, one-parent families are more prevalent in American cities than in rural areas: 1982 figures show that 20% of families living in standard metropolitan areas are single-parent, compared with 15% in nonmetropolitan areas (13).

Throughout the country, 12 million children—one out of five—are now living in one-parent families, and a million more are being added to that total each year. Female-headed families, which comprise 9 out of 10 one-parent families, are increasing 10 times as quickly as two-parent families (8). The Bureau of Census estimates that 45% of all children born today in this country will spend at least a year living with one parent (10).

The typical three-person family headed by a single mother operates on an average yearly income of $7,035—just a little more than a third of the average income ($20,400) of the typical four-person family headed by a father and mother (9). Partly because of reduced income that results from removal of one parent, usually the father, single-parent families tend to relocate more often. A 1980 longitudinal study (8) of 26 schools in 14 states found that one-parent families with elementary school children tend to relocate twice as frequently as two-parent families; at the secondary level the ratio was three to one (8).

In addition to being more mobile, women heading single-parent families are often employed outside the home. Among female-headed families with school-age children, 72% of the women are employed, compared with 59% employment among mothers in two-parent families (4).

Are Single-Parent Children At-Risk in School?

Early research has indicated that children from single-parent families scored significantly lower on achievement tests, had more behavioral problems in school, and received lower teacher-assigned grades than did children in two-parent families (3). However, recent work reexamining earlier research for methodological and statistical adequacy tempers some of these findings and concludes that single-parent children are at less academic risk than previously thought (3, 11, 14).

Hetherington et al. (3) in a review of 58 studies, found the differences between children in one- and two-parent families on tests of intelligence and aptitude are usually small and become less significant when socioeconomic status is considered. They note the difference in IQ between children in single- and two-parent families is smaller than the difference in teacher-assigned grades and postulate that the greater disparity in grades may be due to

- teachers perceiving students who do not conform to school routines and requirements as less competent
- students' functioning in school being affected by home conditions surrounding separation and divorce
- children having less time for homework because of household and child-care tasks.

Newer studies do, however, confirm earlier findings regarding the behavior of single-parent children. Researchers generally agree that, in relation to two-parent children, one-parent children

- are absent, truant, and tardy more often
- have less efficient work or study habits
- are more disruptive in the classroom
- at the secondary level, visit in-school health clinics more often
- are more likely to drop out of school (3, 8).

Recent research has also found that parents' divorce tends to have longer lasting and more serious effects on the behavior of boys than on girls. Among both boys and girls, the absence of a father by death is less detrimental than absence due to the voluntary separation of the parents (7). For children of divorce, behavior problems such as disobedience, aggression, and excessive demands for attention are most frequent during the first two years after the divorce and then tend to decrease (3).

Although research indicates that, as a group, single-parent children exhibit more behavioral problems, and that many factors negatively affecting achievement and behavior may be more prevalent in one-parent homes, single-parentness is not necessarily the problem (14). For example, in a NAESP study (8), using subsidized school lunch participation as a proxy for family income, data on 14,493 students in grades 7-12 indicated that family income and the sex of the student had a greater effect on achievement rank than did the absence of a parent (usually the father) in the home.

Several studies have found that single-parent children actually function better than children in conflict-ridden families, and one study found children of divorced parents to be more independent in school and at home (2).

Because working women usually head single-parent families, many have assumed that their children suffer the doubly harmful effects of loss of one parent and lack of attention from the other. Although there has been little research on the effects of maternal employment on one-parent families, existing studies do not support popular assumptions. The evidence suggests that if adequate provisions are made for child care and maintenance of household routines, maternal employment may have no adverse effects on children (7). One exception to this finding is that if a mother begins to work at the time of divorce or shortly thereafter, the preschool child may tend to exhibit a higher rate of behavioral disorders (7).

The Minority Single-Parent Family

While there has been a great deal of research on the single-parent child, most studies have dealt with the effects of divorce but have neglected large numbers of families in which the mother never married. Furthermore, little work has been done on how the experience of living in a single-parent (usually fatherless) household differs according to such factors as race and urban versus rural habitation. Such factors may be important. As Hetherington et al. (3) note, the presence of extended families and community networks among blacks may make the single-parent experience significantly different for black children.

With regard to achievement, studies of black children, like interracial studies, show small and nonsignificant effects of one-parent rearing (3). There is some evidence, however, that the social and emotional adjustment of urban black children—both from single-parent and two-parent families—may be hindered by the "latchkey phenomenon," a term used to describe the increasing number of children who, for a certain number of hours each day, are expected to care for themselves without the supervision of an adult. Although this phenomenon occurs in all socioeconomic groups, it may be more prevalant among urban, black elementary school children, where the ratio may be as high as one in three (6).

In their study of latchkey children in grades 1-6 in a black, urban parochial school, Long and Long found that such children often suffer increased fear responses and insecurity, and, because they frequently are not allowed to invite friends to their homes, experience a serious curtailment of socializing play (6).

On the other hand, older studies indicate that the child-rearing practices of working mothers in lower socioeconomic groups and in one-parent (usually female-headed) families may be superior in some ways to the practices of other mothers in enhancing the social and emotional adjustment of their children. Working mothers are more likely to create structured environments for their children and to be more consistent in dealing with them (4). Consistency and structure have been shown to facilitate the adjustment of children who are under stress (3).

In terms of hope and expectations for their children, black single mothers are no different from all other mothers. Black mothers whose marriages have ended or who never married have been found to be no less aspiring for the educational achievement of their children than are mothers in two-parent families (3).

The Single-Parent Family and the School

A recent study of parents and teachers found that teachers had lower expectations of children from single-parent families (5). Likewise, parents perceived that teachers would have lower expectations of such children. The findings suggest that teachers' negative expectations for single-parent children may have an effect on performance, and underscore the need for teachers and administrators to exercise care in dealing with single-parent children and their parents. The literature contains a number of recommendations:

- Teachers and administrators should avoid using pejorative language (e.g., broken families) and expressing prejudicial attitudes toward single-parent families, and should be flexible in scheduling parent-teacher conferences (1, 9).
- Schools should provide curricula that do not perpetuate the "typical family" myth of working father, stay-at-home mother, and two children. (In fact, ony 7% of today's American families fit this mold) (9).
- Administrators should keep close records on single-parent children; requests by noncustodial parents for report cards and school records should be granted (1, 8, 9).
- School personnel should recognize the needs of single-parent families by way of special services for teachers, parents, and children. These services may include provision of in-service seminars for educators that can teach them to recognize symptoms of stress in the classroom; discussion groups for children and/or their parents, led by school counselors or outside professionals; and informational materials and reading lists for single parents from various organizations (9, 10, 12).

Summary

Today, schools are more and more called upon to accomodate students' differences in background and experiences; this picture of diversity also includes the growing number of one-parent families. However, educators need to be cautioned against expecting "trouble" from the child from a one-parent family. The diversity among research findings suggests that while, as a group, single-parent children tend to have more behavioral problems in school and are at greater risk in terms of truancy and dropout rate, the likelihood of any particular child having cognitive or behavioral problems depends upon the interaction of many factors. Among those factors are the adequacy of child care arrangements; the number of siblings; the structure of the child's environment in both the home and the school; the amount of nurturing the child receives; the age, sex, and race of the child; the socioeconomic level of the family; and the circumstances surrounding the separation of the parents. Therefore, the only accurate answer to the question of whether single-parentness is harmful to a child's academic or behavioral development may well be, "It depends."

—Patricia Palker Roddy

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Building School-Family Partnerships for Learning: Workshops for Urban Educators

Communication Skills and Strategies

Workshop Leader's Guide

Developed for
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
U. S. Department of Education
by Lettie B. Cale

OVERVIEW

KEY CONCEPT

Effective communication skills and strategies are essential for building school-family partnerships, and serve as the foundation for building all other school-family activities.

RATIONALE AND PURPOSE

The foundation for all other forms of family involvement in education is home and school communication. Good two-way communication between families and schools is essential to support student success in school. Without good communication, it is unlikely that activities can be implemented and goals achieved in other facets of parental involvement. (Chrispeels, 1987)

Research over the past twenty years has shown expanding but uneven contact with parents. Parents with less than a high school education and very low incomes were most likely to have low levels of contact with teachers and schools (Moles, 1993). Families indicate, however, that they are interested in meaningful collaboration with teachers. "Studies indicate strong interest in their children's education among low-income and minority parents. Disadvantaged parents appear anxious to cooperate with teachers despite difficulties in doing so." (Moles, 1993)

The great diversity among families means that it is not possible to design a single method of communication that will reach all homes. A variety of strategies, adapted to the needs of particular families will be needed. Personal contact, including conferences, home visits, telephone calls, and curriculum nights or "open houses", seem to be the most effective forms of communication. (Liontos, 1992)

Even though educators realize that is important to communicate with families, they often feel frustrated in their efforts. Factors contributing to this frustration are:

- lack of communication skills,
- a natural tension between teachers and parents, and
- differences in perspectives. (Chrispeels, 1987)

The purpose of this workshop is to assist school staff (principals and teachers) in:

(1) developing the competencies needed for effective school-family communication,
(2) analyzing the type, extent, and quality of school-family communications, and
(3) developing a plan for ongoing activities to strengthen school-family communications.

LEARNER OBJECTIVES

By the end of this workshop, participants will be able to:

1. Describe the conditions necessary for building trust and respect between schools and families.
2. Explain the need for effective communication between schools and families.
3. Identify obstacles to communication with families, and suggest means of overcoming those obstacles.
4. Analyze personal competencies needed for effective communication between school staff members and families.
5. Practice and model interpersonal communication skills.
6. Analyze the types, extent, and quality of communications between schools and families that need to occur throughout the school year.
7. Make initial plans for the next steps to take in developing more effective communications between schools and families.

ACTIVITIES		TIME ESTIMATE
#1	Introduction; Communication Skills Needed for Building School-family Partnerships	15 min
#2	Analyzing Personal Competencies in Communication Skills	15 min
#3	Practicing Interpersonal Communication Skills	30 min
#4	School, Classroom, and Staff Barriers to Communication with Families	25 min
#5	Analyzing Current Communication Practices	25 min
#6	Taking the Next Steps; Conclusion	10 min
	Total	120 min

Transparency masters and copies of participant handouts can be located in the sections following this guide.

PREPARATION FOR THE WORKSHOP

Please follow the instructions for preparing for all workshops found in the beginning of this volume. This includes information on all equipment and materials needed to present this workshop. In addition, these following special arrangements should be noted.

Workshop leaders should also:

- talk with principals and teachers who have developed good school-family communication strategies, and request samples of newsletters, policies, flyers, letters, memos and other items they have found effective.
- collect information relative to current communication practices used by the schools with which they willing be working. This information can be used throughout the workshop to make the presentation as relevant as possible to the audience.

The Workshop Leader may wish to place a flip chart near the door with the following message:

WELCOME TO COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES WORKSHOP!

1. Please make a name plate.
2. While waiting for the workshop to begin, please:
   - do the "Personal Inventory" in your handouts,
   - get acquainted with someone new,
   - have some refreshments.
3. Thank YOU for your interest and participation.

Activity #1 Introduction: Communication skills needed for building school-family partnerships.

Objective: To describe the conditions necessary for building trust and respect, and to explain the need for effective communication between families and schools.

Recommended Time: 15 minutes

Directions and Procedures:

1. Explain to participants that the **Personal Inventory** they have just completed (see workbook) covers various issues to be discussed in this workshop. It is for their use only. Suggest that they keep their responses before them during this workshop to consider where resources might be needed to help them improve communications.

2. In a calm, serious manner, ask each individual to think of a secret that they have never shared with anyone before. Be sure to allow several minutes of silence to allow the tension to build. After a few minutes of silence, ask participants to call out the conditions that would be necessary if they were going to share this secret. Usually there will be an enormous sign of relief and giggles as participants realize you are not going to have them reveal the secret.

   Record the first 6-8 conditions on flip chart. Then discuss how these same conditions are necessary for successful parent-teacher communications and conferences. The ideas just shared will be important themes addressed throughout the workshop (e.g., trust, respect, acceptance, positive relationships, honesty, able to keep confidences, etc.) ***Allow 5 minutes.***

3. Present the key concept, purposes and objectives for the workshop. Refer to ***Overview Handout.*** Explain that there are two strands or themes for this workshop;

   a. development of personal communications competencies, and
   b. effective use of school-family communications.

Use transparencies T-1, T-2, T-3. Allow 5 minutes.

4. Present the following information with ***T-4, "Need for Communication."***

   Communication has been identified by researchers as the foundation upon which family involvement activities are built. Good communication between teachers and parents is needed to:

   - share information about the child's progress, needs, and interests,

   - establish shared goals for the child's education,

- inform parents of what is expected in terms of student behavior and achievement,
- tell teachers what parents expect relative to curriculum and discipline,
- tell parents of special classroom activities and events,
- avoid misunderstandings, and
- help parents understand how they can reinforce school instruction at home.

Conclude by stating that two-way communication between teachers and parents can build good school-family partnerships if:

- the partnership is assumed to be an equal one in which both parents and educators contribute to the education of young people, and
- the partnership is based upon mutual trust and respect with educators taking the initiative to develop and nurture these key ingredients to effective collaboration. ***Allow 5 minutes.***

Activity #2: Analyzing personal competencies in communication skills

Objective: To analyze personal competencies needed for effective communication between schools and families.

Recommended Time: 15 minutes

Directions and Procedures:

1. Present the following information on the basis for effective communication. "Effective communication is an essential starting point for building school-family partnerships. Without it the mutual support and collaboration of families and school staff cannot take place. Since partnerships imply that both parents and educators contribute to children's school progress, communication needs to flow in both directions and be based on mutual trust, respect, and understanding.

   "Effective communication is based on personal skills or competencies as well as interpersonal and organizational supports including school activities. Certain personal competencies are important for interacting with all parents, especially those from different backgrounds and cultures. The list of personal competencies on ***Handout #1*** includes such key competencies for effective multi-cultural interaction.

   "Looking at ***Handout #1, "Personal Competencies,"*** people often find themselves satisfied with their skills in some areas, and dissatisfied in others. Please reflect on your own competencies and fill out this self-test as candidly as possible. This form is for your personal use as a resource and will not be turned in."

   Place transparency, ***T-5, "Personal Competencies,"*** on the overhead projector. Ask participants to "star" three competencies on ***Handout #1*** that they think are most important in communicating with families of varying backgrounds and cultures. In triads, ask participants to share their lists of most important competencies, 1-2 competencies of which they feel proud or satisfied, and 1-2 competencies that they would like to improve. Participants identify competencies that appeared on several lists. ***Allow 5 minutes.***

2. In their triads, participants find a common situation that was not handled well that related to a competency which they would like to improve, or one member volunteers a situation. The triad members then share ideas on how it could have been better handled. ***Allow 5 minutes.***

3. Close the activity by asking participants with a show of hands to identify 4-5 competencies on which they would like assistance. Discuss: what support do teachers need from principals and school districts in developing effective communications with parents? Remind participants to model these competencies as we proceed to the next activity. ***Allow 5 minutes.***

Activity #3: Developing interpersonal communication skills

Objective: To identify effective communication strategies.

Recommended Time: 30 minutes

Directions and Procedures:

1. Open the activity by briefly stating the following:

   a. Research indicates that the more parents and teachers share pertinent information with each other about a student, the better equipped they will become to help that student achieve academically. (Barth, 1979; Cotten and Savard, 1982; Douglas, 1970; McKinney, 1975; Smith, 1968). Specifically, appropriate communication through conferences, phone calls, workshops, school meetings, notes or newsletters and home visits can: (1) increase parents' ability to construct a healthy home learning environment for children (Yap, 1987); (2) help teachers develop better instructional strategies for use in classroom lessons; and (3) have a positive effect on student's academic achievement (Evans, 1991; Erbe, 1991). Refer participants to ***Handout #2, What Research Says about the Importance of School-Home Communication*** and suggest that they may wish to read it at their leisure.

   b. However, according to the *Metropolitan Life Survey of the American Teachers*, 1987, 19% of parents said that they feel awkward or reluctant to talk with school officials; while 55% of teachers said they feel uneasy or reluctant to approach parents to talk about their child.

   c. If schools, teachers and parents are to begin to close this "communication gap", broadening the strategies used to communicate **and** providing supports and training for teachers and parents in the skills necessary to implement new strategies are necessary steps in building more effective school-home communications. ***Use T-6***

   d. Ask participants to quickly brainstorm ways in which schools communicates with families. List responses on a flip chart. Meetings, parent-teacher conferences, telephone calls, etc. will most likely be among the responses as they are common practices in most schools. ***Allow 5-6 minutes***

2. a. State to participants that one approach to improving school-home communications is to consider improving the implementation of strategies already in place. In other words, building on strengths. In this next activity we use role plays to look at four different communication strategies that are commonly found in schools -- parent/teacher conferences, home visits, phone calls and meetings -- and explore how they can be improved. All these strategies encourage two-way communications by personal contacts so that parents and teachers can gain support and guidance immediately from each other. (***Total time activity time - 18-20 minutes***)

Divide participants into small groups. Assign each group a different communication strategy and a copy of a corresponding handout that they may use for reference during the activity (***Use T-7***):

Group A - Parent-Teacher conferences/***Handout #3***
Group B - Home Visits/***Handout #4***
Group C - Positive Phone Calls/***Handout #5***
Group D - Communicating through Meetings/***Handout #6***

Each group will be asked to spend a few moments to think of how their assigned communication strategy is currently implemented in their school. Ask them to think about the times it has been successful. Ask them to think of a situation when it was not very successful either for them or for a parent. (***Allow 2-3 minutes***)

Ask for a volunteer from the group to suggest a situation when they felt their assigned communication strategy was not successful and to briefly set the stage for the scenario or role play for their group. (***Allow 2-3 minutes***)

Ask for volunteers within the group to role play the parts of parent(s), teacher(s) and/or administrator within the scenario. Suggest that volunteers role play their parts for about 5-6 minutes while the rest of the group looks on. Assign a timekeeper to keep track of time and stop the role play after about 5-6 minutes. Ask each of the volunteers who acted out the role play to report out to their small group how they were feeling during the exchange -- Were their needs being met? How were they feeling? What would they wish was different?

Ask each group to review their role play and brainstorm some strategies that could have improved their situation for all of the players. Each small group should be prepared to report out to the large group on at least **one** change in strategy they suggested to improve their communication scenario and tell why. Suggest that those who will be reporting out capsulize the information in two sentences to keep reporting out brief.

b. Ask each of the groups to report out. Close the activity by thanking participants for their involvement and by offering a round of applause for the actors.

Activity #4: School, classroom and staff barriers to communication with families

Objective: To identify school-based obstacles to communication with families and to suggest means of overcoming those obstacles.

Recommended Time: 25 minutes

Directions and Procedures:

1. State: As we saw in Activity #3, communication can be improved by changing strategies. In this activity we will begin to explore factors that hinder communication.

   Divide the participants into small groups of 4-5 people. Assign a category (school, classroom or staff) to each group. There may be more than one group in each category.

   State that there is research evidence that parents of all income levels and ethnic backgrounds desire more participation in their children's education. For example, in a survey done in seven southwestern states, 95 percent of the African-American and Hispanic parents said they should be sure their children do their homework, and they want to spend time helping them get the best education. Teachers also want more parent participation in their children's education.

   State that there are, however, school, classroom and staff attitudes, policies and practices that hinder communication with families. Instruct the participants, depending on their group, to list factors in:

   - school policies and practices, or
   - classroom arrangements and practices, or
   - staff attitudes and actions that hinder school-to-home communication in the left hand column on ***Handout #7***.

   Then, they should select one item from their list, and suggest ways to overcome that barrier. Direct them to list their ideas in the right hand column, "Strategies to Overcome Hindering Factors." ***Allow 15 minutes for generating ideas.***

   Possible "Hindering Factors" for each heading appear below:

   School Policies and Practices:

   - Space is unavailable for private conferences.
   - Inadequate supply of materials for sending information home to families.
   - Telephones are not made available for teachers to call parents.
   - Progress reports seldom sent home.
   - Few contacts are made with parents, and those tend to be negative.

- No encouragement of personal (one-to-one) contacts.

Classroom Arrangements and Practices:

- Scheduling appointments with parents who work full time during the school day.
- Classroom climate is not welcoming to parents.
- No adult-size chairs for parents

Staff Attitudes and Actions:

- Difficulty in managing teaching responsibilities and finding time to talk with parents.
- Belief that parents are incapable of helping their children at home.
- Belief that teachers are the best authority on what is best for students.
- Focusing on the inadequacies of students.
- Use of educational jargon when talking with parents.
- Lack of understanding of the cultural background of families.
- Lack of knowledge of ways parents can help their children learn.

2. Ask reporters from several small groups to share 2-4 items in the left hand column ("Hindering Factors") from his/her list. **List on a flip chart under headings school, classroom or staff.** Ask for the strategies they thought of to overcome one of the hindering factors. Note on flip chart by corresponding idea. ***Allow 10 minutes for sharing ideas.***

Activity #5: Analyzing current communication practices

Objective: To analyze the types, extent, and quality of communications between the home and school that need to occur throughout the school year.

Recommended Time: 25 minutes.

Directions and Procedures:

1. State that communications can be roughly divided into the following categories:

    - those that occur at the beginning of the year
    - those that are ongoing
    - those that are only occasional
    - those that occur at the end of the year.

    Ask participants to brainstorm or list examples of their current communication strategies that fall under each of these categories. ***Allow 5 minutes.***

2. Divide participants into small groups and assign each group the task of exploring one of the four categories listed above. Direct participants to select one strategy from the brainstorming activity that falls under their assigned category (e.g., newsletters might be a strategy under the ongoing) that they would like to analyze in this activity. Direct them to ***Handout #8, "Communication Checklist,"*** and ask them to use the questions on this form to assess their chosen communication strategy. ***Allow 5 minutes.***

3. Instruct groups to turn to ***Handout # 9, "Force Field Analysis of Communications Strategies."*** State that their task is now to use this format to analyze the strategy they selected in #2 above. Each group should brainstorm strengths and possible constraints or barriers and record these as indicated on ***Handout #9***. (Groups may wish to select a second strategy if time permits). ***Use T-8. Allocate 10 minutes***

4. Close the activity by asking participants how they might use the **Communication Checklist** and/or the **Force Field Analysis** in their own school(s). Hopefully, participants will suggest administering the checklist to representatives of the school community (i.e., teachers, administrators, parents) as a means of assessing current practice and planning for improvements. ***Allow 5 minutes.***

Activity 6: Taking the next steps; Conclusion

Objectives: To further reflect upon the knowledge and skills educators need to effectively communicate with parents.

To develop initial plans for the next steps to developing more effective communications between families and schools.

Recommended Time: 10 minutes, with optional added activities.

Directions and Procedures:

1. Point out that to implement strategies for improving communication with parents will require planning. Note also that although school-family communication is the foundation of all other parent involvement activities, it is one component of a comprehensive school-family partnership program.

2. State that to improve school-family communications, an action plan would need to be developed. In the amount of time available in this workshop, we cannot develop a complete action plan, but we can begin the initial steps. Direct the participants to turn to ***Handout #10, "Next Steps for Strengthening School-family Communications,"*** and complete **Step 1, parts a. and b.** Ask them to consider the school, classroom and staff barriers discussed earlier.

   If time permits, suggest they look at the strengths and areas needing improvement. They should list some specific steps they will take to improve communication with parents in their school and/or classroom in **Step 2**. As far as possible, complete the "Action Steps" in **Step 2** at the bottom of the page. Urge the participants to fill in the "Who Will Do It?" and "When Will It Be Done" even if the assignments are tentative. This is important because without assigning responsibility and setting timelines, nothing will happen. Remind the participants in planning their "Action Steps" to consider having various types of activities throughout the school year. Ask if there are any questions.

3. (Optional) Ask one person from each table group to briefly share their action plan. (If the group will be returning for another workshop, encourage them to bring a progress report on their action plan.)

4. Conclude workshop by reviewing the key concept, purpose and objectives. Relate the objectives to each activity. Summarize with the following points:

   - Educators will be able to communicate more effectively with families if they develop personal competencies in a variety of communication skills.

   - Schools and educators need to use a variety of communication strategies throughout the year to effectively communicate with families.

- Personal contact including conferences, telephone calls, curriculum nights or "open houses", and home visits, seems to be the most effective form of communication with families. ***Use T-9. Allow 5 minutes.***

COMMUNICATION SKILLS AND STRATEGIES

Transparencies

T-1 Key Concept
T-2 Purpose
T-3 Learner Objectives
T-4 Need for Good Communication
T-5 Personal Competencies
T-6 Quote
T-7 Communication Strategies
T-8 Force Field Analysis of Communication Strategies
T-9 Workshop Summary

KEY CONCEPT

Effective communication is essential for

building school-family partnerships,

and serves as the foundation

for constructing all other

home-school activities.

PURPOSE

To assist school staff in:

- Developing the competencies needed for effective school-family communications;
- Analyzing the types, extent, and quality of school-family communications; and
- Developing plans for ongoing activities to strengthen school-family communications.

LEARNER OBJECTIVES

By the end of this workshop, participants will be able to:

- Describe conditions needed for trust and respect.
- Explain need for effective communication.
- Identify obstacles to communication.
- Analyze personal competencies.
- Practice and model interpersonal communication skills.
- Analyze the type, extent, and quality of school communications.
- Make initial plans for improving communication strategies.

NEED FOR GOOD COMMUNICATION

Foundation of all family involvement activities.

- Share information about child's progress, needs, and interests.
- Establish shared goals for child's education.
- Inform parents of school's expectations.
- Inform teachers of parents' expectations.
- Inform parents of special activities and events.
- Avoid misunderstandings.
- Reinforce school instruction at home.

PERSONAL COMPETENCIES

DIRECTIONS:

- Mark a Y = Yes, N = No, or S = Sometimes, by each item.
- Put an * by the 3 competencies you think are most important in communicating with parents.
- In triads, share:
    - The 3 competencies you consider most important.
    - 1 competency you feel you have.
    - 1 competency which you would like to improve.

The more parents and teachers share information about a student the better equipped they will become to help that student achieve academically.

COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

DIRECTIONS

- Please refer to the following handouts:

Group A.	Handout #3, Parent-Teacher Conferences;
Group B.	Handout #4, Home Visits;
Group C.	Handout #5, Positive Phone Calls;
Group D.	Handout #6, Communicating through Meetings.

- Role play a scenario related to your topic.

- Brainstorm improvement strategies for your topic.

FORCE FIELD ANALYSIS OF COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

EXAMPLES

Category: On-going Communication
Type of Communication: Newsletter

Strengths	Constraints
Well-written Distributed monthly Interesting graphics	Never evaluated to see if information is what parents want. Not translated into home languages.

Category: Beginning of the Year
Type of Communication: Parent Handbook

Strengths	Constraints
Homework policy	Learning objectives not shared with

WORKSHOP SUMMARY

- **Educators will be able to communicate more effectively with families if they develop personal competency in a variety of communication skills.**

- **Schools and educators need to use a variety of strategies throughout the year to effectively communicate with families.**

- **Personal contact, including conferences, telephone calls, open houses or curriculum nights, and home visits, seems to be the most useful form of communication with families.**

Building School-Family Partnerships for Learning: Workshops for Urban Educators

Communication Skills and Strategies

Participant Handouts

Overview: Key Concepts, Rationale and Purpose, Learner's Objectives

Personal Inventory *(please complete while waiting for workshop to begin)*

Handouts:

1. Personal Competencies
2. What Research Says about Home-School Communications
3. Parent-Teacher Conferences
4. Home Visits
5. Positive Phone Calls
6. Communicating Through Meetings
7. Ideas for Overcoming School, Classroom, and Staff Barriers to Communicating with Parents
8. Communications Checklist
9. Force Field Analysis of Communication Strategies
10. Next Steps for Strengthening Home-School Communications

Additional Resources (annotated publications)

References

Communication Skills and Strategies

OVERVIEW

KEY CONCEPT

Effective communication skills and strategies are essential for building school-family partnerships, and serve as the foundation for building all other school-family activities.

RATIONALE AND PURPOSE

The foundation for all other forms of family involvement in education is home and school communication. Good two-way communication between families and schools is essential to support student success in school. Without good communication, it is unlikely that activities can be implemented and goals achieved in other facets of parental involvement (Chrispeels, 1987).

Research over the past twenty years has shown expanding but uneven contact with parents. Parents with less than a high school education and very low incomes were most likely to have low levels of contact with teachers and schools (Moles, 1993). Families indicate, however, that they are interested in meaningful collaboration with teachers. "Studies indicate strong interest in their children's education among low-income and minority parents. Disadvantaged parents appear anxious to cooperate with teachers despite difficulties in doing so" (Moles, 1993).

The great diversity among families means that it is not possible to design a single method of communication that will reach all homes. A variety of strategies, adapted to the needs of particular families will be needed. Personal contact, including conferences, home visits, telephone calls, and curriculum nights or "open houses", seem to be the most effective forms of communication (Liontos, 1992).

Even though educators realize that is important to communicate with families, they often feel frustrated in their efforts. Factors contributing to this frustration are:

- lack of communication skills,
- a natural tension between teachers and parents, and
- differences in perspectives (Chrispeels, 1987).

The purpose of this workshop is to assist school staff (principals and teachers) in:

(1) developing the competencies needed for effective school-family communication,
(2) analyzing the type, extent, and quality of school-family communications, and
(3) developing a plan for ongoing activities to strengthen school-family communications.

LEARNER OBJECTIVES

By the end of this workshop, participants will be able to:

1. Describe the conditions necessary for building trust and respect between schools and families.
2. Explain the need for effective communication between schools and families.
3. Identify obstacles to communication with families, and suggest means of overcoming those obstacles.
4. Analyze personal competencies needed for effective communication between school staff members and families.
5. Practice and model interpersonal communication skills.
6. Analyze the types, extent, and quality of communications between schools and families that need to occur throughout the school year.
7. Make initial plans for the next steps to take in developing more effective communications between schools and families.

PERSONAL INVENTORY

Assessing the Parent-Teacher Relationship - For Your Use Only

Answer "Yes", "Sometimes", or "No". If you are not a teacher, answer in terms of most teachers in your school.

Principle #1: Classroom Climate

_____ Are parent observers welcome in the classroom?
_____ Are there any adult-sized chairs, besides the one for the teacher?
_____ Is the classroom organized so that a parent can see what happens in it easily?
_____ Are examples of every child's work displayed regularly?
_____ Is the classroom routine written down and clearly posted?

Principle #2: Communication

_____ Are parents informed at the beginning of the year how they can reach you, the teacher?
_____ Do you tell parents about the good things, as well as the problems?
_____ Do you try to communicate at least once a month with each family?
_____ Do you talk to parents in person (or on the phone), in addition to sending written messages?
_____ Do you provide regular opportunities for parents to see their child's written work?
_____ Do you let parents know of expectations for homework, grading policies, and how parents can help?
_____ Do you let parents know what information about the child is needed to help you do a better job (e.g., family stress or major changes in family--illness, birth, death, divorce, etc.)

Principle #3: Parents as Collaborators

_____ Do you ask parents for their advice on how to deal with their children?
_____ Is there an early warning system for notifying parents if a student is falling behind and/or having social problems, so that you might confer with them about the situation?
_____ Are parents encouraged to advise you when a child is exhibiting a learning or school adjustment difficulty at home?
_____ In suggesting ways that parents can help at home, do you take into account a student's particular background and situation?
_____ Do you make it clear to parents that they must respect your need for time alone and with your family?
_____ Do you help parents understand that their child's needs must be balanced with those of the whole class?

Principle #4: Outreach to All Families

_____ Do you make a special effort to reach families from various cultures, (e.g., home visits, translators)?
_____ Are you persistent in your effort to reach parents who try to avoid coming to school?
_____ Do you meet outside regular school hours, if necessary, with parents who are employed?
_____ Will you make a home visit if that is the only way to meet a parent?

(Adapted from A.Henderson, Marburger, C.L. and Ooms,T. (1986) *Beyond the Bake Sale: An Educator's Guide to Working with Parents.* Columbia, MD: National Committee for Citizens in Education. Used with permission.)

Personal Competencies

The following competencies have been identified by researchers as most important for effective multicultural relationships. Each of the competencies is, to some degree, interrelated with the others, but each is important on its own as well.

Directions: Following each item, mark "Y" = "Yes" if you feel you have good skill in that competency, "N" = "No" if you feel your skills are lacking or need much improvement, and "S" = "Some" if you feel you have some skill in that competency.

_____1. **Personalizing Observations:** Being able recognize and accept that perceptions may not be shared by others; knowing and accepting that "my way is not the only way"; use "I" not "you" messages.

_____2. **Paying Attention to Your Feelings:** Being able to self-reflect on one's thoughts, feelings, and stress level in order to stay grounded in situations.

_____3. **Managing Personal Biases/Stereotypes:** Being able to treat people as individuals recognizing that everyone belongs to many groups and that no one represents a group.

_____4. **Being Non-Judgmental:** Being able to stop one's tendency to negatively judge others who are different.

_____5. **Listening Carefully:** Being able to pay close attention to what is being said both verbally and nonverbally.

_____6. **Observing Attentively:** Being able to watch and make mental notes of behavioral patterns of others in order to understand the meaning of behavior (e.g., nonverbal messages).

_____7. **Assuming Complexity:** Being able to assume and perceive a range of alternatives in situations; to recognize multiple perspective and outcomes exist.

_____8. **Tolerating Ambiguity/Uncertainty:** Being able to respond to unpredictable situations without getting stressed and cranky.

_____9. **Being Flexible:** Being able to readjust quickly and effectively to changing situations.

_____10. **Having Patience:** Being able to stay calm, stable and persistent in trying situations.

_____11. **Being Resourceful:** Being able to respond skillfully and promptly in new, uncertain situations. Seek information about the cultures of those with whom you interact.

____12. **Having a Sense of Humor:** Being able to laugh at oneself and with (not at) others; finding humor in the irony of life.

____13. **Showing Respect:** Being able to behave in respectful manner towards others who are different.

____14. **Displaying Empathy:** Being able to vicariously feel the thoughts, attitudes and experience of another. Results from respecting and interacting with diverse others.

Adapted from C. Dodd and F. Montalzo, *Intercultural Skills for Multicultural Societies,* 1987;
G. Ferraro, *The Cultural Dimension of International Business,* 1990;
P. Pederson, *A Handbook for Developing Multicultural Awareness*, 1988;
M. Sikkema and A. Niyekawa, *Design for Cross Cultural Learning*, 1987.

This "Personal Competencies List" is from the training module on personal level skills developed from the multicultural training model by Dr. Mikel Hogan Garcia, California State University, Fullerton, (704) 773-3309, c. 1990. Used with permission.

What the Research Says About the Importance of School-Home Communication

Reginald Clark and Associates

Educational research indicates that the more parents and teachers share pertinent information with each other about a student, the better equipped they will become to help that student achieve academically (Barth, 1979; Cotten and Savard, 1982; Douglas, 1970; McKinney, 1975; Smith, 1968). Parent-teacher consultation and collaboration create the climate for maximum realization of a student's potential. Specifically, appropriate communication through conferences, phone calls, workshops, school meetings, notes or newsletters, and home visits can (1) increase parents' ability to construct a healthy home learning environments for children (Yap, 1987), (2) help teachers develop better instructional strategies for use in classroom lessons, and (3) have a positive effect on student's academic achievement (Evans, 1991, Erbe, 1991). The quality and quantity of parent-teacher communication are important in affecting student achievement (Slaughter, 1986).

Parents' school participation and home involvement with a child's learning has a powerful effect on academic growth and development. In fact, the extent of parents' home involvement is much more powerful in determining a student's academic success than the family's socio-economic status (Walberg, 1984). However, the extent and quality of parents' home involvement is directly affected by the way(s) schools communicate and interact with them (Sasser, 1991). For example, school-based parent workshops can increase parent-initiated positive contacts with the school (Towns and Jones, 1979; Watkins, 1990). Also, when teachers make efforts to make parents feel comfortable in communicating with the teacher parents' attitudes toward school can improve (Stevens 1984; Duran, 1991).

Furthermore, communication strategies that ignore the ethnic-cultural backgrounds of the students or parents and/or are not designed in culturally sensitive ways may lead to parental mistrust and withdrawal (Harry, 1992; Delgado-Gaitan, 1990). Parents want to learn how to help their children in school (Morton-Williams, 1970; Stevens 1984; Barth 1979; Douglas, 1970; Epstein, 1984; Peach and Reddick, 1987). They also want information on health care and child-rearing issues (General Mills, 1977; Towns and Jones 1979; Cassidy, 1988). A review of research shows that direct parent instruction of their own children at home positively effects school achievement (Cotten and Savard, 1982). But, parents need specific information on how to help and what to do (Morton-Williams, 1970; Green, 1984).

Teachers, too, can reap positive benefits from home-school communication. In national surveys, teachers note the positive value that effective parent-teacher communication can have on a child's school performance (Harris, 1987; 1991). In other studies, teachers have seen that positive written and verbal communication with parents can lead to improved student reading achievement (Epstein, 1984; Smith 1968; Slade, 1988), or can have a positive impact on students' self concept (Cotten and Savard, 1982), and can reduce the incidence of student's disruptive classroom behavior (Safran, 1979; Barth, 1979). Researchers have emphasized the need for teachers to learn more about the ethnic groups represented in their classrooms in order to develop positive attitudes toward parents and students from those groups (Lightfoot, 1978). In short, effective communication can improve both teacher-student relations and teacher-parent relations (Safran, 1979; Sterns, 1973; Melnick and Fiene, 1990).

There are a variety of effective strategies for communication. **Parent-teacher conferences** are a common type of home-school communication. At conferences, parents can be given information and materials to help their child at home. Some studies cite conferences as one of the main communication tools available to teachers (Barth, 1979; Iverson, et al, 1981).

Telephone conversations between teacher and parent are another commonly used way to open the channels of communication (Iverson, et al, 1981; Smith, 1968). Also, some research shows that **home visits** by teachers can lead to improvements in student achievement (Gordon, 1979).

Workshops to train parents to help their children are another form of communication that can help improve students' test scores, attitudes, attendance, and self-concept (McKinney, 1975; Smith, 1968; Siders and Sledjeski, 1978; Gillum, 1977; Watkins, 1990; Evans et al, 1991). Specific training of parents for **home teaching of reading** is an effective way to encourage and increase children's involvement in mentally stimulating activities at home as well as at school (Bloom, 1984; Gillum et al, 1977; Henderson, 1981; Morton-Williams, 1970; Siders and Sledjeski, 1978; Smith, 1968; Towns and Jones, 1979; Epstein, 1984). Through workshop-based communication, parents can gain more confidence in contacting the school for help and advice (Towns and Jones, 1979; Watkins, 1990) and can improve their parenting skills (Sterns et al, 1973).

Open House discussions and **Curriculum Nights** are other methods of creating a beginning contact with parents. Written communication is a good follow-up to contacts between parents and teachers in these settings (Iverson et al, 1981; Barth, 1979).

Effective communication starts with a well-thought-out plan, and a good **plan of communication** starts with the school administration (Davies et al, 1992; Peach and Reddick, 1987). A well designed communication plan can result in parents improving their parenting skills (Sterns et al, 1973). The components of a comprehensive plan include (1) assessing the structures that may support or impede teacher-parent communication, (2) planning activities and strategies for communicating with (and recruiting) parents and encouraging their participation in information-sharing communications, (3) providing parent training activities, (4) linking parents and families to services that may affect their ability to communicate with school personnel, (5) establishing powerful roles for parents on advisory committees, (6) developing/providing materials for parents to use to help them make the best decisions, (7) providing professional development opportunities for teachers and staff, and (8) conducting ongoing assessments and summative evaluations of communication activities (Clark, 1991).

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Parent-Teacher Conferences

Step One: Preparing for the Conference

1. **Have a procedure for documenting each child's academic progress and behavior.**
   a. Prepare a file folder, file box or notebook for each child.
   b. Include both academic progress and behavioral records. Examples of student's work, test results, anecdotal records, attendance and health records, responses to questionnaires, parent notes and questions should be included.
2. **Contact the parent(s) to arrange the conference.**
   a. Make arrangements by telephone or letter. Explain the purpose, place, time, length of the conference and the child care provisions. There is less opportunity for confusion relative to date and time if arrangements are confirmed by letter.
   b. Include in the letter a list of preparatory questions or planning sheet to help parents prepare for the conference. This will help to identify parent concerns.
   c. Hold conferences at times when parents can attend without too much inconvenience. Conferences may be scheduled before school (or the parent's job) starts, in the evening or on Saturdays. When possible, coordinate conference times if there are siblings in the school.
   d. Arrange for translators if necessary.
3. **Arrange a place for the conference.**
   a. Hold the conference in a place where you can have a private, uninterrupted conversation with the parents.
   b. Seat the parents and teacher on the same level, preferably away from the teacher's desk. Arrange for adult size chairs, around a table, if possible. Have the room freshly ventilated and well lit.
   c. Arrange for a comfortable place where parents can wait. Give them a folder of their child's work to examine or ask them to fill out a questionnaire about their concerns.
4. **Think through your objectives for the conference.**
   a. What do you want to accomplish? What do you need to communicate? Write down the areas or topics you plan to cover.
   b. What steps can you follow during the conference to assure that your objectives are met? What information do you want from the parents? What points will you make? What suggestions will you offer?
   c. What materials will you share with the parents? Are they organized to complement your conference plan?
   d. How will you end the conference? What specific steps will you recommend? How can the parents work with you to improve their child's education?
5. **Prepare the students by talking about the purposes of the conference.**
   a. Help the students to understand the purpose of the conference is to help them.
   b. Ask them to complete a simple questionnaire about themselves.
   c. Enlist the students' in decorating the room with displays of their work, and making it a welcoming place for parents.

Step Two: Conducting a Progress Report Conference

Note:

Prior to the conferences, place adult-sized chairs outside the classroom door and post a list of the scheduled conferences. Give waiting parents a folder of their child's work to review. It will make waiting easier, and gives them a chance to prepare for the appointment. Keep appointments on schedule.

1. **Welcome and establish rapport with the parent as an adult.**
   a. Begin the conference with some general conversation by asking about the parent's work, hobbies, interests.
   b. State the purpose and time available for the conference. Encourage note-taking and discuss opportunities for a follow-up meeting.
2. **Discuss the student's positive attributes.**
   a. Be as specific as possible in describing the student's strengths, assets, and positive accomplishments; give examples.
   b. Ask parents to describe what they see as the child's strengths.
3. **Describe the child's progress focusing on what has been learned in each subject since school started.** Note: Teachers at various grade levels tend to emphasize different aspects. For example, the kindergarten teacher emphasizes exploration. The primary grade teacher stresses development of basic skills (reading, math), and the upper grade teacher accents great awaremess of personal development of personal strengths and interests.
   a. Be as precise as possible in terms you are sure the parent will understand. Show examples.
   b. Ask parents how they feel about their child's progress. Listen for expectations and frustration. If necessary, paraphrase the concerns so that mutual understanding is insured.
4. **Discuss areas that need improvement.**
   a. Begin by asking parents what area they feel they would most like to see their child strengthen.
   b. Describe, in specific terms, areas in need of improvement, and what the teacher is doing to address the problem.
   c. Ask for parent concerns and suggestions.
5. **Identify one area to work on for growth or improvement and develop a plan of action.**
   a. Choose one thing that concerns both you and the parent. Be sure it is one with which the parent can help. Ask the parents for ideas on ways they could help.
   b. Give specific suggestions, if the parents are not sure what to do.
   c. List actions that have a high probability of success, then choose one or two for the parent to try. Write them on the *Student-Parent-Teacher Worksheet*. (See sample, page 37.)
   d. State what you will be doing in the classroom to help the child.
   e. Establish a timeline with parents for these actions.
   f. Discuss with the parent some kind of reward for the child for improvement in the selected area.

Step Two: Conducting a Progress Report Conference, continued.

6. Conclude the conference on a positive note.
   a. Summarize what the parent and you will be doing to help the child.
   b. Indicate how and when you will follow-up; thank parent for coming.

Step Three: Following-up After the Conference

1. Document the conference for future reference.
   a. Have a simple form to record the important points. This may be a copy of the worksheet completed during the conference.

2. Evaluate the conference.
   a. Ask the parents to complete an overall conference evaluation form immediately after the conference. *(See page 40 for a sample evaluation form.)*
   b. Evaluate the conference yourself by assessing if your objectives were accomplished, if rapport was established with the parent, and how the conference might have been improved.

3. Both the parent and you should review the conference with the child, as appropriate.
   a. Explain the plans the parent and you made to help the child be successful.

4. Share information with other school personnel, as needed.

5. Follow-up with a phone call, letter or note to express appreciation and to report progress within a few days.
   a. Send a copy of the plans made during the conference to the parent which may encourage the parent to follow through on his/her commitment.
   b. Make adjustments, if needed, in the actions planned.

(Adapted from Chrispeels, 1990; Cale, 1992.)

Elements Necessary for a Successful Conference

- **Cooperative Spirit**--Parents and teachers leave with a positive attitude toward each other and a willingness to continue working cooperatively together. Not all issues necessarily resolved but there is a willingness to continue the dialogue.

- **Enhanced Trust**--There is an increase in the level of trust between parents and teachers and neither is trying to control the behavior of the other.

- **Greater Mutual Knowledge**-Parents and teachers know more about the child than they did before the conference.

- **Better Understanding**-Parents and teachers leave the conference with a better understanding of each other's goals expectations and what each is trying to do to support the child's learning.

- **Plan of Action**--Parents and teachers leave the conference with a plan of action to help the child be successful. (Chrispeels, 1990)

Home Visits

Home visits are a unique opportunity for real two-way communication between home and school. They acquaint the home visitor with a child's family and culture, and provide a familiar setting for listening to parents' concerns and for recognizing their contributions to the home-school partnership. Home visits may be the only way of communicating with hard-to-reach parents who are reluctant to come to school meetings, who do not have a telephone, or who cannot read written material sent from the school.

Home visits can serve a variety of goals. They can be used to:
- introduce parents and teachers to each other,
- welcome new families to the school community,
- demonstrate home learning activities to parents.
- report on student progress in school,
- solve specific problems, and,
- survey parents for their views on school policies and programs.

Benefits of Home Visits:

The student can:
1. Have the opportunity of welcoming the teacher into the home and of watching how the teacher reacts to it.
2. Show the teacher new aspects of him/herself.
3. Illustrate problems and situations that he/she may find difficult to articulate.
4. Profit from the relationship that the teacher establishes and maintains with the parent(s).

The parent can:
1. Meet, on a more relaxed basis, the teachers with whom the student spends an important portion of his/her day.
2. Have the opportunity to ask questions of a professional educator.
3. Communicate from the security and comfort of the home.
4. Illustrate problems or frustrations that require direct observation.
5. Ask how to help the student at home, knowing that the teacher can see the home in which the proposed assistance would take place.

The teacher can:
1. Obtain support from parent(s) that will reinforce the teacher's efforts.
2. Gain insights into the parent-child relationship that influences the student.
3. Obtain specific information about the student that is of value in providing motivation.
4. Observe situations that might foretell potential changes or account for changes that have already taken place in the student's behavior.
5. Provide information and support to parent(s) regarding the student.
6. Learn how he/she is perceived by the student and the parent(s) of the student.
7. Observe the degree of social order or disorder in the home that influences student behavior.

The school can:

1. Signify the willingness of the school to "go more than halfway" to involve parents in their children's education.
2. Give parents a clear message that the school is caring and concerned about communication with parents.
3. Increase the level of trust between the school and its parents.
4. Increase the willingness of the parents to come to the school.

(Adapted from Decker and Decker, 1986; Office of Community Development, n.d.)

School administrators can facilitate home visits by:

- setting the example of visiting one home per month themselves,
- encouraging teachers to make one home visit a semester,
- arranging time for teachers to plan and carry out home visits,
- providing substitutes or dismissing classes early to provide home visit time,
- providing mileage reimbursement,
- offering escorts and translators to teacher willing to make home visits,
- allocating resources to hire community aides to conduct home visits.

Home visits can be conducted by teachers, community aides, or trained volunteers (parents and community members). The home visitor should be sensitive to cultural differences and always set a tone of mutual respect and consideration. If parents refuse a home visit, their wishes should be respected. Reluctant parents may be more receptive to a home visit if the visitor is accompanied by a familiar third party, such as friend of the family, a neighbor, or a respected clergyman. Home visits may also be held in housing project meeting rooms, church recreation halls, or community meeting rooms.
(Chrispeels, Boruta, and Daugherty, 1988)

Preparing for the Home Visit

The commitment of the entire school staff is needed for home visits to be successful. Administrators and teachers must be involved in planning the program and must agree to participate. Home visits are more likely to be successful when:

- Teachers' schedules are adjusted so that they have the necessary time.
- Home visits are scheduled in a selected month of the year and not stretched out through the entire school year.
- Visits are logged and documented so that teachers and administrators can measure the scope and effectiveness of the program.
- Every home that requests a home visit is honored with one.

1. **Schedule a time for the visit.** There is no "best" time to visit. Some schools have scheduled home visits in the afternoon immediately after school dismissal. With so many employed parents, early evenings or weekends may be preferred. Teachers of siblings may

collaborate to schedule concurrently their visits to these children's home.

2. **Contact parents, establish rapport.** Explain that you want an opportunity to get acquainted with the child's parents so that you can work together to help the child learn even more. Emphasize that the purpose of the visit is to introduce the teacher and family members to each other, and not to discuss the child's progress. Set up an appointment time when parents can talk for 15-30 minutes, uninterrupted. Be clear about where the meeting will happen, how to get there, whether an interpreter is needed.

3. **If the parents are literate in English, a letter may be sent to them explaining the desire to have teachers make informal visits to all students' home.** This letter should include a form that parents can mail back which allows them to graciously decline/accept this opportunity. The letter should state clearly that the intent of this 15-30 minutes visit is to introduce the teacher and family members to each other. This visit is not a substitute for a parent-teacher conference and is not to discuss the child's progress. The tone of the letter should be friendly and informal.

4. **Suggest to parents that the child plan ahead of time what special things he/she wants to share with the teacher.** This may be pets, favorite toys and games, hobbies, projects, favorite books or places in the home.

5. **Prepare a list of questions designed to involve the parent in a discussion of the child's social, emotional and educational development.** For example:
   - *What are your child's interests?*
   - *Can your child read and does he/she enjoy reading or being read to?*
   - *How do you think the youngster feels about school?*
   - *Does he/she show curiosity by asking a lot of questions?*
   - *Does your child have specific responsibilities at home?*
   - *What does your child do in his/her spare time?*
   - *Have you noticed if the child seems to have any learning problems?*
   - *Do you have any concerns or anything you would like to ask us?*

6. **Prior to the visit, think through the following questions:**
   a. Am I going to the home with an open mind?
   b. Am I willing to learn from the parent?
   c. Do I believe the parent(s) has/have anything of value to teach or share with me?
   d. Are my attitudes conducive to creating a positive, on-going relationship with the parents?

7. **Arrange for a translator if the school visitors do not speak the parents' languages.**

(Adapted from Chrispeels, Boruta, & Daughtery, 1988; Decker and Decker, 1986; Faison, 1984; Office of Community Development, n.d.)

During the Home Visit

1. **Establish rapport with the parent through a warm, friendly greeting.** Talk in a relaxed manner about general topics, express interest in the child's activities at home, reinforce parent with encouraging comments. Talk with the child and the parent about the things they show you such as pets, hobbies, toys, etc.

2. **Make it clear to the parent that you are concerned about the child's success.** Ask the parent for their observations and/or concerns about the child. (See questions under 5. on the preceding page.) Ask if the parent has any questions. Discuss possible help for the parent with his/her concerns. Invite the parent to upcoming school events such as open house, parent-teacher conferences,etc.

3. **Close the visit by thanking the parent for his/her time and hospitality.** If appropriate, set date and time for another meeting.
   (Adapted from Chrispeels, Boruta, and Daugherty, 1988)

After the Home Visit

Following the home visitation, the school staff should:
1. Record important details.
2. Follow through on some specific activity or arrangement.
3. Send a personal message so that the parent(s) will know that the follow-through action has been taken, if needed.
4. Follow-up with the student, if necessary.
5. Make an evaluation of the visit.

(Adapted from Decker and Decker, 1986; Office of Community Development, n.d.)

Positive Phone Calls

Imagine how you would feel as a parent if you were contacted by a teacher or the school principal and told that your son or daughter is doing well in school...that the child has overcome a learning or behavior problem that he or she had been experiencing. Be prepared for a response indicating shock or surprise. Parents are not accustomed to hearing good things about their children over the telephone.

Home-school communication is greatly increased through personalized positive telephone contact between teachers and parents. When a telephone call from school carries information that is positive, the atmosphere between the home and school is improved.

Strong support from school administrators, who must provide teachers with the time and resources they will need, is required to implement a positive phone program. Teachers should be involved in the planning of these programs to ensure their commitment to making them effective.

In order to ensure success with a positive phone program, schools must be willing to:

1. **Provide adequate access to telephones.** The program will not succeed unless teachers have a private and comfortable place from which to make their calls. Schools may need, therefore, to install additional telephone lines in teacher workrooms, or provide incentives for teachers to call in the evenings when more parents are at home.

2. **Make time available to the staff to make the calls.** Designate certain months of the year for making positive telephone calls during which time can be made available in the daily schedule, or during class preparation time for teachers to take on this extra responsibility.

3. **Develop, with teachers, a set of guidelines for making telephone calls.** These guidelines could outline several purposes for making telephone calls to parents, as follows:
   - Introducing the teacher to the parent
   - Telling the parent about what the students are studying
   - Inviting the parents to open houses, conferences, and other school functions
   - Commenting on a child's progress
   - Informing the parent of a particular achievement of the child, such as having been selected "Student of the Week"
   - Informing the parent of particular strengths of the child and sharing an anecdote that involves the child.

4. **Provide translation services for parents, as needed.**

5. **Provide a reporting system.** Teachers should maintain log books or calling cards so that the school has a record of positive phone calls. In this way, teachers and administrators can have a clearer sense of the scope and effectiveness of their efforts on a school wide basis. (Adapted from Office of Community Development,n.d.; Roberts, n.d.)

Other Uses of the Telephone in Communicating with Parents

Automatic Telephone Answering or Message Machines:

Schools are using automatic telephone answering or message machines to provide information to parents on a call-in basis. Information on topics similar to those addressed in school newsletters or handbooks, but in an oral rather than a written form can be provided. Messages can be recorded in the languages spoken by the parent community.

Automated telephone systems or telephone answering machines can be used, as follows:

- The telephone can serve as a recorded bulletin board giving time, date, and place for upcoming parent meetings, extra curricular activities, and school events. These messages are changed regularly.

- The telephone system can provide pre-recorded information on district or school specific programs such as busing schedules, school lunch programs, and integration or magnet school options.

- The telephone can be used to give pre-recorded information to students and parents on general topics of concern such as drug and alcohol abuse, ways for parents to help their children succeed in school, school laws, and testing. A card is distributed to all parents which lists the available pre-recorded messages.

The advantages of automated systems are that they are inexpensive to operate and the caller can remain anonymous. However, callers need to be given numbers where they can get additional help. (Chrispeels, Boruta, Daugherty, 1988)

Additional Examples:

In Casey County, Kentucky, some classrooms have been outfitted with portable phones to make it easier for parents and teachers to contact one another.

The Chapter 1 Program in Omaha, Nebraska, has established a telephone service called the Chapter 1 Talk Box. Callers hear a three-minutes message about books and reading. Messages are changed twice a week and correspond with lessons in the classroom.

At Lincoln Prep High School in San Diego, the school helps students and their families find needed community services through a school-sponsored telephone referral system.

In Connecticut, ten schools have been using the telephone as a constant link between schools and families. As part of a pilot program offered by the Southern New England Telecommunications

Corporation, several classrooms have been equipped with a phone message service that can send recorded messages of any length simultaneously to all students, or to any parent individually. Parents can also leave messages to which the teacher responds. Teacher Madeline Mongillo uses the system to send messages to parents about each day's assignments and activities. It replaces the old paper messages, she says, that often would get lost in students' book bags. (Liontos, 1992)

TransParent School Model:

In the TransParent School Model, every teacher records a short message daily in an "electronic mailbox." When parents call and enter the teacher's code number, they hear a summary of what the students studied that day, homework assignments, suggestions to parents, and information about school activities. The message can be accessed from any touch-tone phone at any time. For more information contact: Jerold P. Bauch, Director, Betty Phillips Center for Parenthood Education, Box 81, Peabody College of Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee 37203. (615) 322-8080. (Bauch, 1990.)

Communicating through Meetings

Research indicates that parents value highly face-to-face interactions with teachers and other school personnel. Meetings can be a valuable vehicle for providing this contact that is essential in building the rapport, trust, and understanding necessary for parents and teachers to work together. Important goals for all meetings are to convey information about the school and its programs, and to initiate and maintain a positive feeling about the school and staff.

"Meetings will be more successful if those who are planning the meeting follow some of these proven practices:
- Vary the types of meetings.
- Involve a cross-section of parents in planning school meetings.
- Set an attendance target and decide how best to achieve it.
- Make sure the purpose is clear and important to parents.
- Hold meetings at times most convenient for the intended audience.
- Provide adequate advance notice.
- Have parent volunteers call other parents.
- Announce the meeting on the school marquee.
- Send follow-up reminders.
- Provide child care or involve children in the program.
- Provide transportation if needed.
- Evaluate the meeting to see it can be improved in the future."

(Chrispeels, Boruta, Daugherty, 1988)

Ideas for various type of meetings appear below. In attracting parents to events at the school, planners need to keep in mind the "Three F's"--Family, Food and Fun.

Open Houses or Curriculum Nights:

An Open House or Curriculum Night works best if held once a year, at a time of low schedule conflict, and with much advance **planning, preparation and publicity.**

Parents at both elementary and secondary levels are more likely to attend when:
- their child is featured in some way,
- there will be an opportunity to examine student work and talk with teachers,
- the time is convenient,
- they receive a personal welcome or invitation,
- they expect to experience a cordial atmosphere, including refreshments,
- the open house has a stated purpose the parents consider personally important, and
- they have been involved in the planning.

The Open House or Curriculum Night may be the culminating event of a schoolwide art exhibit or science fair.

Organizing an Open House or Curriculum Night:

1. Invitations: Have the students make them or send them to the parents the week before school starts. Students love the important responsibility of inviting their parents to the open house for you!

2. Name Tags: Have students make them during the day or as parents enter the room in the evening.

3. Agenda: The principal or teacher may briefly address the entire group, sharing information on general school goals and policies. Each teacher discusses the following with the parents of his/her students:
   a. Welcome the parents.
   b. Respond to first of the year questions/concerns.
   c. Explain the academic direction for the year--curriculum areas in which the class will be working; major requirements such as book reports, special projects; the grading scale.
   d. Explain the discipline plan.
   e. Identify ways parents can contribute to their child's learning and how the teacher will communicate with the parents--what they can expect of the teacher and what the teacher expects of them. For example, the teacher expects them to see that their child does 30 minutes of homework each night; they can expect to receive a parent bulletin each Friday.
   f. Answer any other questions the parents may have.
   g. Thank the parents for coming. End the session promptly.
   (Adapted from Porter,n.d.)

Grade Level Sessions:
Another approach to the Open House or Curriculum night is to hold Grade Level Sessions. By dividing a large group of parents into grade-level sessions, classroom teachers could relate their grade-level expectations of the year's work, familiarize parents with textbooks, and show the schedule of a typical day. This might prove a good time to acquaint parents with educational terms such as "computer-assisted instruction," "learning centers," "behavior modification," etc. Some teachers use grade-level meetings to actually give lessons to parents--the same lessons the children receive in the classroom. This way, parents experience for themselves the kind of instruction the child encounters. (Autrey, 1985)

Introducing the Year's Parent Activities:
The Open House or Curriculum Night can also be used to tell parents about ways they can help their children lean more at home. The workshops on families and homework give many good ideas in this area, too. The school and teacher's plan for involving parents throughout the year can be discussed, and volunteers recruited to help plan and carry out home-school partnership activities.

Open House or Curriculum Night Entertainment:
Although visiting children's classrooms and meeting teachers is the heart of Open House or Curriculum Nights, consider "jazzing up" the occasion. A meal or a covered-dish supper could be served ahead of time with entertainment provided by the students. This way, dinner is taken care of, parents can watch their children perform--and they are in school learning what goes on there.

Other Types of Parent Meetings:

Orientation Night:

The school hosts an Orientation Night during the first week or two of school. This meeting provides an opportunity for parents to learn about schoolwide policies and programs such as discipline, homework, extra curricular activities, scheduling and how parents can be involved. In addition, parents may meet with teachers individually, by grade level, or by departments.

Teachers explain the curriculum, materials, classroom organization, behavior codes, expectations, and planned activities for the year. Teachers sometimes use this time to teach demonstration lessons so that parents can be exposed to the same kinds of lessons their children experience at school. (Chrispeels, Boruta, Daugherty, 1988)

Potluck Luncheon with the Teachers:

Teachers invite their students' parents to a noon potluck luncheon in the classroom. In an informal way, the teacher shares the current activities of the classroom. The informality will help parents feel more comfortable in coming to school.

Take a Parent to Lunch:

Help working parents to become active by asking them to visit the school during their lunch hour and eat lunch with their children and classmates. The principal and teachers move about the lunchroom getting to know parents and discussing the school.

Continental Breakfast for Parents:

Parents, especially fathers, are invited to come to school for a continental breakfast with their children and to spend the morning in observation and discussion. Their children take them on guided tours of the school. The parents hear from their children's teachers about the year's goals, methods, and schedules. They visit classes where they can see first hand what their children are doing.

Handout #7

Ideas for Overcoming School, Classroom and Staff Barriers to Communicating with Parents

Category: School: ____ **Classroom:** ____ **Staff:**____

Hindering Factors:	Strategies to Overcome Hindering Factors:

Communications Checklist

***Directions:** Use this checklist to analyze the communication strategies you listed on the "Communication Strategies Used in Our Schools." Indicate Y=Yes, N=No, M=Maybe.*

_____ 1. Are a variety of communication strategies used to convey the same information, e.g., face-to-face, telephone, video, conferences?
Comment:

_____ 2. Do the communication strategies promote two-way exchange of information?
Comment:

_____ 3. Is the information communicated of value to parents/families?
Comment:

____ 4. Are provisions made to communicate in other languages if there are non-English speaking families?
Comment:

____ 5. Are parents made to feel comfortable in communicating with school staff?
Comment:

____ 6. Are school policies, expectations, goals, communicated in clear, easy-to-read language?
Comment:

____ 7. Are communications timely, i.e., the notes go out before the activity or before there is a crisis?
Comment:

____8. Are communications and out-reach activities extensive enough to reach every family?
Comment:

___ 9. Do communications about the child describe strengths and progress when discussing problems?
Comment:

Handout #9

Force Field Analysis of Communication Strategies

Category of Communication: Please check **one** of the categories below:

_____1. Beginning of the School Year
_____2. On-going Communications
____3. Occasional Communications
____4. End of the School Year

Directions: Please list the strengths and possible constraints on the communication strategy you analyzed on Handout #8. If time permits, do the same for a second communication strategy.

Type of Communication:____

Strengths	**Constraints**

Type of Communication:____

Strengths	**Constraints**

List a communication strategy that you would like to improve in your classroom or school:____

How would you strengthen this strategy? Indicate techniques you would use to overcome the constraints and build on strengths. (Use back of page for your comments.)

Handout #10

Next Steps for Strengthening Home-School Communications

Step 1:

a. List 3-4 strengths of the home-school communications in your school or district:

b. List 3-4 areas that need to be improved in home-school communications in your school or district.

Step 2: What are the next steps that need to be taken to strengthen home-school communication in your school or district? Use form below to plan the action steps.

Action Steps	**Who Will Do It?**	**When Will It Be Done?**	**Evidence Completed?**
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			

Additional Resources on Communicating with Parents

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. *Guidelines for parent-teacher conferences.* Videotape. 27 minutes. (Contact: ASCD, 1250 North Pitt Street, Alexandria, VA 22314-1403, phone: (713) 549-9110.)

This videotape provides teacher and administrators with clear explanations and demonstrations of how to conduct a conference on motivational concerns. The 27-minute videotape demonstrates 8 guidelines for these conferences. Teachers in actual conferences demonstrate each of the guidelines.

Bauch, J.P. (1990). Touch 1 for improved parent-teacher contact. *School Safety,* Spring, 1990, 25-27.

A new telecommunication system called the "Transparent School Model" is described in this article. Through the use of a touch tone phone, parents can receive information from a short message recorded daily by the teacher. Information relative homework assignments, what the students are studying, school activities, and suggestions to parents are recorded in the "electronic mailbox."

California State PTA. (1991) *Parents Empowering Parents: the California State PTA Parent Education Manual.* Educational Assessment Publishing Company, Inc.

Although this publication is written from the parents' viewpoint, educators will find the chapters, "Parent-School Communication" and "Parent-School Conferences," helpful. Samples of a beginning of the school year letter, on-going communications, "teacher-grams", problem-solving in parent-teacher conferences, and a sample conference follow-up letter are included.

Chrispeels, J. (1990) *Parent-Teacher Conferencing: A Workshop for School Staff.* San Diego, California: author.

This booklet contains the presenter's script, workshop handouts, and masters for overhead transparencies for a workshop on parent-teacher conferences. The workshop provides instruction in the nine actions necessary for successful conference preparation, the three steps for effective conferences, the six phases of a report conference, and seven phases of a problem-solving conference.

Chrispeels, J. (1988) Building collaboration through parent-teacher conferencing. *Educational Horizons*, 66 (2), 84-86.

This article discusses the importance of teachers' attitudes toward parent-teacher conferences, how to lay the ground work for the first conference, and preparing, conducting, and following up on the conference.

Chrispeels, J.; Boruta, M., and Daughtery, M. (1988) ***Communicating with Parents.*** **San Diego, California: San Diego County Office of Education.**

Designed to help schools and teachers communicate better with parents, this notebook is divided into two sections. The first half focuses on schoolwide communications and involvement strategies. The second half of the book addresses teacher-parent communications and is organized to share examples and ideas on how individual teachers can improve their working relations with parents. Many examples of newsletters, student handbooks, survey forms, introductory letters, student progress reports, and checklists are included.

Granowky, A., Rose, A., and Barton, N. Parents as partners in education. ***Ginn Occasional Papers.*** **Ginn and Company.**

This paper contains practical approaches for building home-school partnerships. Strategies for encouraging parents to become involved are given, including those for scheduling conferences. Preparations for a conference which need to be done by teachers as well as responsibilities for other school staff are listed. Finally, evaluation of the conferences by parents provide guidance for future conferences.

Henderson, A.T., Marburger, C.L. & Ooms,T. (1986) ***Beyond the Bake Sale: an Educator's Guide to Working with Parents.*** **Columbia, Maryland: The National Committee for Citizens in Education. 139 pages.**

Beginning with the five types of parent involvement in education, this book encourages educators to examine their attitudes and practices toward parent involvement through several checklists. Barriers to home-school collaboration are examined, and helpful hints are given for teachers and principals in dealing with parents.

Lawrence, G. & Hunter, M. ***Parent-Teacher Conferencing.*** **El Segundo, California: TIP Publications. 103 pages.**

This publication is a comprehensive guide to parent-teacher conferences. Among the topics covered are various types of conferences, conferencing skills, communication theory, special problems, and logistics. Throughout the publication, principles are illustrated with realistic examples of dialogue between parents and teachers. Examples of forms, memos and notes relative to parent-teacher conferences are also included.

Rich, Dorothy. (1987) ***Teachers and Parents: an Adult-to-Adult Approach.*** **Washington, D.C.: National Education Association. 112 pages.**

This monograph focuses on the complementary roles of parents and teachers. Among topics covered are the changing family situations, building trust between teachers and parents, examples of specific activities teachers can do to build home-school partnerships, and working with single parent families. One sections discusses parent-teacher conferences.

Riepe, L.D. (1990) For the benefit of all: planning and conducting effect parent conferences. *Exchange*. August, 47-49.

Some of the barriers to good communication between parents and teachers are identified in this article. Teachers need to gather data, including, anecdotes about the child, so that they can give specific examples of the child's progress and needs. The conference should be a discussion, between the parent and teacher, rather than a lecture. A rewarding aspect of parent-teacher conferences is the way children improve as result of them.

Stephens, T. M. & Wolf, J.S. *Effective Skills in Parent/Teacher Conferencing*. 22 pages. Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University, 1980.

Four steps in parent-teacher conferences are covered in this booklet: rapport building, obtaining information, providing helpful information, closing and follow-up activities. Exchanging information about the child without fault-finding, formulating questions, dealing with special problems, describing students' progress, and training activities are also included.

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Building School-Family Partnerships for Learning: Workshops for Urban Educators

Homework and Home Learning Activities

Workshop Leader's Guide

Developed for
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
U.S. Department of Education
by Janet Chrispeels

OVERVIEW

KEY CONCEPT

Families are more likely to reinforce and extend classroom instruction at home when teachers give high quality homework assignments, provide home learning ideas and materials, and guide families in how to help.

RATIONALE AND PURPOSE

Research has shown that homework given in the elementary grades is an important means of extending children's learning time and building positive study habits which benefit students throughout their academic careers. Teachers' practices critically influence the amount and type of learning activities in which parents engage with their children (Epstein and Becker 1982 a and b; and Epstein and Dauber, 1988). Therefore, teachers need to develop homework assignments that are interesting and appropriate for students. In addition, the school staff needs to become aware of school and classroom factors which promote and hinder parents' involvement in their children's learning at home and work to enhance the promoting factors and eliminate the hindering factors.

Research has also shown that families differ in their approach and ability to assist their children with homework and to engage in home learning activities (Caplan, Choy, and Whitmore, 1992; Clark, 1983; Clark, 1992; Lareau and Benson, 1984). Because of these differences, schools and teachers need to take a more active, coherent and consistent approach to homework. In addition, teachers need to provide guidance and support to families in ways that will reinforce and enhance family learning practices.

The purpose of this workshop is to assist school staff (principals and teachers) in developing coherent schoolwide homework guidelines, practices, and high quality homework, and in implementing home learning programs that engage families and extend children's learning time away from school.

LEARNER OBJECTIVES

By the end of this workshop, participants will be able to:

1. Define the characteristics of high quality homework assignments;

2. Understand the research on homework and home learning;

3. Define the roles and responsibilities of schools, grade level teams, and individual teachers in regard to homework and home learning activities;

4. Know how to modify homework assignments to include family and/or community interaction;

5. Identify sample family learning programs.

ACTIVITIES		TIME ESTIMATE
#1 Introduction: What are the characteristics of high quality homework?		20 min.
#2 Understanding the research on homework		20 min.
#3 Developing schoolwide homework guidelines and practice		30 min.
#4 Developing interactive home learning activities		30 min.
#5 Exploring school level family learning programs		10 min.
#6 Summary and conclusions		10 min.
	Total	120 min.
Taking the next steps: optional activity		40 min.

Transparency masters and copies of participant handouts can be located in the sections following this guide.

PREPARATION FOR THE WORKSHOP

Please follow the instructions for preparing all workshops found in the beginning of this volume. This includes information on all equipment and materials needed to conduct the workshops. In addition, the following special arrangements should be noted.

Prior to leading this workshop, the workshop leader needs to:

- become familiar with the topic by reading the materials for the entire workshop, including some of the articles in the Reference and Reading List;
- talk with principals and teachers who have addressed the issues of homework, have developed good home learning materials, and who have implemented any of the family learning programs mentioned in Activity #5;
- collect samples of homework policies from districts or schools who will be attending the workshop;
- familiarize one's self, as much as possible, with homework practices of workshop participants; and
- study the workshop outline and adapt it to one's personal style and informational background. Activity #2 involves a mini-lecture summarizing some of the research findings about homework. As the workshop leader you will want to become familiar with this material so that you can present it in your own words, adding appropriate illustrations from your experiences.

This workshop focuses on homework and home learning activities at both the school and classroom levels and examines schoolwide actions and teacher practices. Some teachers already have developed good homework practices and involve families in teacher-initiated home learning activities. However, as Epstein and Becker (1982) showed, these exemplary practices are not widespread. This is why this topic is approached from a schoolwide context. *Individual teachers will be greatly strengthened in their classroom practices if they are supported by schoolwide homework guidelines, programs, and resources.*

The workshop leader will want to stress throughout the workshop the need for the school to develop a positive, warm, and welcoming environment for parents and effective communication strategies as the foundation for involving families effectively in homework and home learning activities. In other words, parents will best be able to assist their children's learning at home when:

- parents are made to feel welcome and comfortable at school;
- there is an extensive and regular means of two-way communication between home and school, especially about homework, expectations, the curriculum, student progress, and how parents can help;
- there are workshops for parents to learn how to help;
- there is a place at the school parents can meet and call their own;
- parents are given many opportunities at school to show their support for their children;
- teachers are provided with opportunities to learn about students' families, how to communicate with them, and how to involve them in meaningful learning activities both at school and at home; and
- parents have a meaningful role in shaping homework policies and practices and selecting home learning programs.

A word of caution: developing sound homework practices, creating high quality homework assignments and home learning materials, and organizing family learning programs will require considerable commitment by the school staff. This workshop raises **awareness** of critical homework and home learning issues, and provides some possibilities for action. The activities in this workshop should enable the school staff to engage in systematic development of good homework practices; however, each site administrator will need to provide additional time and resources for the staff to accomplish these tasks.

Activity 1: Introduction: What are the characteristics of high quality homework?

Objective: To introduce participants to each other and to describe the characteristics of high quality homework assignments.

Recommended Time: 20 minutes

Directions and Procedures:

Introduce yourself and topic of workshop to participants by stating the key concept underlying this workshop. ***Use T-l.***

Ask participants, if they are teachers, to think for a few minutes about the best homework assignment they have given in the past year, or if parents, think about the best assignment their child has received in the past year. *Allow 1-2 minutes thinking time.*

Ask participants to introduce themselves to two other participants and share the qualities or characteristics that typify a high quality homework assignment. *Allow 5 minutes.*

Refer participants to ***Handout #1*** where they can record the group's ideas. Chart and post responses of participants for all to see. Summarize the discussion by using ***T-2 and T-2a***, if these points have not already been made. (This list of characteristics is a composite of findings drawn from the research cited in the references about homework and is repeated below.)

Characteristics of High Quality Homework Assignments
(See bottom of **Handout #1**)

Students know what they are to do and are able to complete the assignment successfully, e.g., about an 85 to 95% success rate.

Students understand the purpose of the homework, e.g., review, independent practice, application of skills, preparation for next day's class work.

The assignment is not too long and students are given adequate (flexible) time in which to complete it.

The assignment uses information and materials that are readily available.

The assignment reinforces and allows for practice of previously taught skills.

The assignment is not just unfinished class work.

Students find the assignment interesting, and it leads to further exploration and study.

The assignment stimulates creativity and imagination in the application of skills.

Students are encouraged to work together to complete assignments.

The assignments stimulate home and class discussions about the topic.

Review workshop agenda, which has been posted, Purpose and Learner Objectives, using ***T-3*** and ***T-4***.

Activity #2: Understanding the research on homework

Objective: To explain to participants some of the research on homework

Recommended Time: 20 minutes

Directions and Procedures:

1. State that for the next 20 minutes you want to discuss some of the research findings about homework and what schools are doing to ensure that homework is used to best advantage to extend the learning time of students. Give the following mini-lecture:

   a. **Importance of homework.**
   Point out that over the years, a number of studies have been conducted to evaluate the effects of homework on student learning. Unfortunately, many of these studies were not well designed (Cooper, 1989). However, when the studies are examined as a whole, homework is shown to have a positive impact on student learning. The impact is smallest at the elementary level but increases as students move through the grades, having the greatest impact on student learning in high school (Cooper, 1988; Win, 1985).

   One important finding about homework at the elementary level is that giving students regular homework assignments in elementary school positively impacts students persistence with and completion of homework in secondary school, where homework has the greatest effect on learning (Cooper, 1989). *Use T-5.*

   Homework is most effective when it covers material already taught; however, giving an assignment on material that is taught the same day is not as effective as an assignment given to review and reinforce skills learned previously. Also homework is less effective if it is used to teach complex skills (Cooper, 1989).

   Homework is taken more seriously by students when teachers prepare written directions, discuss what is to be done with students, integrate the assignments with classroom instruction, and give a grade for homework (*What Works: Research about Teaching and Learning,* 1986).

   Walberg, et al. (1984) showed that "the assignment and grading of work done at home produces an effect on achievement that is three times as large as family socioeconomic status (as indexed by parental income, education, and occupation). Homework produces uniformly positive effects on the factual, conceptual, critical, and attitudinal aspects of learning" (1984, p. *399). Use T-6.*

   b. **Importance of reading as homework at the elementary grades.**
   Point out that elementary schools sometimes initiate home reading programs. Some of these programs are reading incentive programs that are organized by parent volunteers or the librarian. Other times kindergarten and first grade teachers

specifically ask parents to read to their children. Stress that several studies have shown that when parents are asked to read to their children or listen to their children read on a regular basis (regardless of the home language in which the reading occurs), children's reading achievement improves. (Cummins, 1986; Tizard, Schofield, Hewison, 1982; Toomey,1986; Topping and Wolfendale, 1985). These studies indicate that regular reading assignments, with schools providing books for parent and child to read together, should not be overlooked as part of the homework routine at the elementary level. Obviously, teachers would like students to read on their own once they enter the upper elementary grades; however, teachers should consider structuring reading as part of the daily homework schedule. ***Use T-7***.

c. **Student time devoted to homework.**

The amount of time spent by elementary school students varies from school to school and from district to district, depending on school and district policies. There has been no research establishing a correct or optimum amount of time that elementary students should spend on homework. Many district policies recommend 15 to 30 minutes at the primary grades, and 45 to 60 minutes in the upper grades. Cooper in his book on homework (1989) recommends up to 15 minutes one to three times a week for students in grades one-three, and 15 to 45 minutes two to four times a week for students in grades four - six; however, he presents no research to support these recommendations. A recent study in a large urban school district reported that elementary students were spending more time on homework than typical school district policy averages recommend (Clark, 1983).

Epstein and Becker (1982) found that most parents of elementary students supported their children in doing homework and made attempts to assist them when they had difficulty. They also found that elementary students who are having difficulty with their class work spent more time on homework, but were often not able to complete assignments successfully. From her studies, Epstein also found that parents of these students spent considerable time helping their child with the assignments (1988). What do these findings mean?

- Students who are having difficulty with schoolwork usually require more time to do the same homework assigned to other students who are doing well in school.

- Parents recognize their child is having difficulty, and they do what they can to help.

- Teachers often ask parents of students who are having difficulty to help.

- Many of these students are classified as "homework problems" by the teacher, who interprets the failure to complete homework as non-compliance or non-performance on homework.

- Students classified as "homework problems" often do not like to talk about school or homework, they get tense when doing homework and are more likely to be discipline problems. *Use T-8.*

d. **Changes needed in elementary homework practices.**
These findings indicate the need to rethink homework practices at the elementary grades and to find ways for "homework problems" to become "homework stars." One of the reasons the students may be having homework problems is that they are being given inappropriate assignments, especially assignments of uncompleted class work that has not been sufficiently mastered by the child to do independently at home.

e. **TV viewing in the elementary grades.**
Similar to the high school pattern, television is still a problem for children in elementary and middle schools. The many hours spent watching television limits time available for other educational learning activities, such as reading, hobbies, sports, music, or club activities *(Guidelines for Family Television Viewing, See Families workshop Handouts.)* This is especially true in the large number of homes where children spend time alone between the end of school and 5:30 to 6:00 p.m. because their parent(s) are at work. In the Metropolitan Life Survey of teacher and parent attitudes, fifty-nine percent of the parents and sixty-two percent of the teachers agreed that children spend too much time home alone and that this was having a negative effect on student learning, especially through neglect of homework (Harris, Kagay, and Ross, 1987).

f. **What teachers can do about TV viewing.**
Point out that teachers cannot control the amount of TV viewing; however, they can influence it. One school district implemented a schoolwide home reading incentive program, Books and Beyond (included in Home Learning Materials in Activity 5). Before initiating the program, the schools discussed TV viewing patterns with students and provided charts to record how much time students were watching TV. Students also discussed why they watched TV and what alternative activities they could do, such as reading. As a result of this discussion and providing information to parents about the impact of so much TV watching, when the reading program was launched, parents reported in a follow-up survey that the amount of TV viewing declined, and the librarian reported the amount of books checked out increased (Topolovac, *Summary of Findings from Books and Beyond Implementation,* Solana Beach School District, Solana Beach, CA).

2. Close the activity by referring to the list of characteristics of quality homework generated by the group. Point out that in the next activity they will be examining some schoolwide actions that may help to increase the positive effects of homework.

Refer participants to ***Handout #2*** for a summary of key findings from research on homework. The studies listed on ***Handout #2*** and all the transparencies can be found in the reference list at the end of the Participant Handouts.

Activity #3: Developing schoolwide homework guidelines and practices

Objectives:
1. To explain the importance of developing schoolwide homework guidelines.
2. To describe schoolwide supportive practices and homework systems that help families and increase homework success.
3. To identify roles and responsibilities of individual teachers in implementing homework guidelines and practices.

Recommended Time: 30 minutes

Directions and Procedures:

1. Introduce the following points:

   a. **District initiatives regarding homework**. Point out that many school districts have established district homework policies. Ask how many of the participants' districts have established homework policies. What has been the impact of the policies? Are the policies understood and supported by teachers, parents and students? How do they know (e.g., surveys have been done)?

   b. **School guidelines and implementation needed.** Explain that while district policies are important, it is at the school building level that these policies are given meaning. The district policies need to be supplemented and reinforced by school level guidelines and procedures that ensure consistency among teachers. Parents and students are confused when one child's teacher regularly assigns homework and another one in the same school only occasionally gives homework, or when one child in third grade is assigned more homework than their child in fifth grade. Ask participants if their schools have school level guidelines and how these guidelines are implemented and monitored in their schools.

   c. **Home and school conflicts about homework.** Stress that homework frequently creates tension between parent and child and home and school. On the 1987 Metropolitan Life Survey, 50% of parents and teachers agreed that parents neglect to see that children's homework is completed. Effective schools surveys conducted in San Diego County, CA, consistently showed that failure to turn in homework was a major complaint of many teachers. Parents, on the other hand, reported that the quality and quantity of homework was inadequate and that they and their children did not always understand how to do the assignments. If the potential of homework to increase student achievement and learning is to be realized, new schoolwide initiatives are needed that address both teacher and parental concerns about homework.

   Point out that to strengthen homework as a learning tool and to build positive school-family relations in regard to homework, teachers, administrators, and parents need to work together to develop school level guidelines and practices to support teachers and families. State that in the next 25 minutes you want participants to begin discussion of some of the key school level issues regarding homework.

2. Divide participants into small groups. State that each group will examine a different school level homework issue. ***(Note:** Decide in advance how you will divide groups and assign tasks, e.g., counting off and then giving each group an assignment. If time is an issue, consider dividing participants into only two groups and doing two of the group activities. This will require less time for reporting from the groups. Choose the group activities that will best meet participants' needs. Note that in the participant handouts the directions for each group are given. Refer each group to the appropriate directions for them and to the appropriate handouts.)*

3. Refer each group to the assigned group activity description in the ***Handout #3*** (which is outlined below for ease of reference for the leader). State that each group needs to select a facilitator, a recorder, a reporter and time keeper. Give each group chart paper and felt pens to record ideas that will be shared with the total group. ***Allow 15 minutes.***

   Group 1: Developing school level homework guidelines. The group's task is to review the homework guidelines and procedures in ***Handout #4***. Answer the following questions.
   1) How do the six points presented in this "Procedure for Developing School Level Homework Guidelines" compare with your schools' policies, guidelines, and practices?
   2) What actions have your schools taken or what needs to be done to implement each of these points? Be prepared to report ideas to the total group.

   Group 2: Developing schoolwide practices to assist parents. The group's task is to brainstorm ways their schools are currently assisting parents. Review ***Handouts #5-6***. Discuss how this information can help parents be more informed and supportive of homework. The following are some issues to consider.
   - What other information might parents need and how could this information be shared?
   - How are school and teacher homework expectations communicated to families? Be prepared to report ideas to the total group.

   Some possible ideas to discuss are: 1) inform all parents of homework guidelines by printing them on homework folders, including them in student binders, providing them to parents at back to school nights, reviewing them during parent-teacher conferences, developing a video that explains them; 2) offer strategies on how parents can support homework policy through workshops, the school newsletters, and videos; 3) establish a homework telephone hotline where parents and students can call to find out about the homework assignments.

   Group 3: Developing schoolwide practices to assist students. The group's task is to brainstorm ways their schools are currently assisting students to be more successful with homework. The following are some issues for the group to discuss. Which strategies have proved most successful? Do students know where to go or what to do for homework help? How do you know homework assignments are developmentally appropriate for each grade level? How is homework handled for non-English speaking students? Be prepared to report ideas to the total group.

Some ideas the group may want to consider are: 1) Provide a homework folder for primary children and a binder for upper grade students. 2) Provide a homework journal or calendar for students to write assignments and parents to use for comments and questions regarding homework. 3) Provide a weekly homework packet which allows students to do homework at own pace during the week and weekend. 4) Teach students study and organizational skills. 5) Help students identify study buddies and groups and show them how to work together to complete homework assignments. 6) Establish an after school homework room for students that is staffed by teachers, parent volunteers or high school students. 7) Ask parents to volunteer their home for study hall for neighborhood children after school.

Group 4: Developing schoolwide practices to assist teachers. The group's task is to brainstorm strategies their schools are currently using to assist teachers to develop quality homework, evaluate homework procedures, and solve homework problems. The following are some issues to consider. How have the purposes of homework been clarified, defined? Do teachers share and communicate with each other about homework assignments? Are homework assignments developmentally appropriate? Is reading at home structured into the homework system? Are schoolwide homework problems discussed and solved at faculty or grade level meetings? ***Handout #7**, Critical Questions Regarding Homework,* summarizes some of the key issues that need to be resolved by the staff. Be prepared to report ideas to the total group.

Some ideas for the group to consider are: 1) Provide opportunities during the summer or other vacation periods for teachers in grade level teams to develop quality homework assignments. 2) Principal supervises, supports, and guides in implementing a consistent schoolwide homework plan. 3) Involve all concerned (teachers, parents, and students) in periodically evaluating homework *(**Handout #8**, Homework Evaluation Questionnaire).*

4. At the end of the fifteen minutes discussion time, ask each group's reporter to post the group's ideas on the wall. *Allow ten minutes for participants to take a gallery walk and view what each group has recorded. (Note: members of each group may want to take turns standing by their chart to answer questions.)*

5. Close this activity by asking participants to return to their seats. Reiterate the value of schoolwide homework guidelines and practices. Refer participants to ***Handout #9**, Ways to Strengthen Homework as a Learning Tool,* which summarizes some of the main points mentioned above.

Activity #4: Developing interactive home learning activities

Objectives: 1. To convert a traditional homework assignment into a more interactive assignment which involves family members
2. To explore models of interactive homework
3. To practice designing interactive homework

Recommended Time: 30 minutes

Directions and Procedures:

(Note: *This next activity can be adapted to fit varying time schedules. In this workshop, teachers are introduced to the concept of converting traditional assignments to more interactive homework activities that involve other family members. If more time is available, participants can practice developing their own TIPS Homework Sheets. In fact, one whole workshop could be devoted to this activity.)*

1. Explain that in the next activity participants are going to work to convert a traditional homework assignment into a more interactive one which involves students and their families working together.

2. Show ***T-9*** and refer participants to ***Handout #10****, Creating Interactive Homework Assignments*. As a total group, brainstorm ways in which assignment 1 could be designed to involve other family members. Write the suggestions on the transparency under the heading Family Interactive Assignment (Note: *For this example, one possible interactive assignment would be to interview someone in the family or neighborhood who remembers the day President John F. Kennedy was killed. Ask them to tell you where they were and what they were doing, how people reacted, what they remember of the days immediately after the assassination and the funeral.)*

   a. Divide participants into groups and have each group complete one of the other assignments. ***Allow 4-5 minutes.***

   b. Have each group share their ideas. Ask if others have additional ideas. ***Allow 5-8 minutes.***

3. Brainstorm as a total group, the advantages and disadvantages of such assignments and write group responses on a flip chart. After several minutes of brainstorming, some of the following questions can be posed to stimulate the group's discussion if these issues have not been raised. ***Use T-10, Developing Interactive Assignments. Allow 5-8 minutes.***

   a. Do interactive assignments meet some of the criteria of a high quality homework assignment? If yes, which ones; if not, why not?

   b. How can interactive assignments help to create a more meaning-centered curriculum?

c. When participants (teachers) have used such assignments, what was the response of students, parents?

d. When are such assignments appropriate or helpful?

e. What, if any, are the problems teachers might encounter in creating such assignments?
f. How should such assignments be counted, commented upon?

g. What should be done if the student has no family member who can be involved?

4. Refer participants to ***Handouts #11-12***. Point out that these are examples of family oriented homework sheets. Have the group compare these sheets to some of the ideas they generated in converting traditional homework assignments. What would be the advantage of using such sheets as occasional homework? ***Allow 4-5 minutes for discussion.***

   a. Draw particular attention to the parent response form which is included as part of the ***TIPS - Handout #11***. What would be the advantage of such a response form? Ask if other teachers occasionally solicit feedback on their homework assignments.

   b. Point out that the TIPS Sheets ***(Handout #11)*** were developed over the summer by teachers. In each case, the activities were closely linked to the school's curriculum.

   c. Discuss the home learning activity model ***PIPTRIPS, Handout #12*** developed for kindergarten children by the San Francisco School Volunteers. To transport the materials from school to home, special boxes with handles were given to kindergarten children in the pilot schools. These boxes were sent home every other week with an activity sheets for child and parent to do together. Teachers used these special activities to supplement regular homework. Blank forms were also given to the teachers to develop their own PIPTRIPS to match and support a specific class curriculum focus. The response of parents and teachers to these materials was very positive after the first year of implementation, and the program is now being expanded to include children in the first grade.

   d. If time permits, discuss some other materials that teachers might borrow or adapt to help them develop or design interactive homework ideas, e.g., the multitude of activity books found in book stores, grocery stores, and educational supply centers. Stress that it is important not to overwhelm parents with ideas of what they can or should do with their children. Activities that are sent home should follow the guidelines of other quality homework assignments, that is, the assignment should be done with materials and resources readily available to the student and his or her family.

5. Close this portion of the workshop by reminding participants that you have discussed and practiced developing one type of homework or home learning activity. These activities are best developed in grade level teams, although an individual teacher can use the

models presented. To have schoolwide development and use of such materials, teachers need support from the site administrator or from the district. Curriculum development time is needed during the school year or over the summer. The development of materials such as the TIPS sheets can be done in stages focusing on one subject area at a time, or different schools could take different subject areas.

In addition to developing family interactive homework, teachers also may need to review other homework assignments used for individual, independent practice to see if they meet the characteristics of good assignments discussed earlier, and to ensure they are not causing "homework problems" for some students.

Activity #5: Exploring school level family learning programs

Objective: To introduce sample family learning programs

Recommended Time: 10 minutes

Directions and Procedures:

1. **Defining family learning programs.** Remind participants that in this series of workshops home-learning activities have been defined as all the ways that learning is fostered at home with or without encouragement from schools. For the purposes of this workshop series, we have been most interested in those ways that schools can influence home learning. These activities fall into three broad categories: **homework**, which is an extension of class learning; **home learning suggestions** given by the teacher in which the parent or another family member is meant to be an active partner; and **family initiated** home learning activities (e.g., leisure reading, hobbies, trips, family discussions). In the previous activity, we have been focusing on homework, but schools can also do much to extend and reinforce the other two categories listed above. One strategy is to provide training or workshops for parents and/or parents and their children at the school building level. This section of the workshop briefly introduces participants to the existence of several sample programs.

   a. Stress that the purpose of family learning programs (e.g., Family Math, Family Science) is distinct from homework in that parents and children are helped to learn together first at school before practicing the skills at home. Parents are given ideas and materials that foster and enrich learning opportunities at home. Teachers can reinforce these home learning activities by integrating them into classroom lessons and activities, encouraging students to share at school what they are doing at home, and by providing more parents the opportunity to participate at home by describing some of the activities in school and class newsletters.

   b. Stress that systematically organizing family learning opportunities will give families the tools for promoting learning at home. The impact of these programs, however, will be far greater if they are linked to classroom instruction. For example, in implementing the Family Reading Program, teachers could read the books to the students in the class. The librarian or media specialist could select other books that represent the genre being taught in the Family Reading Workshops. Teachers could ask children who are reading the books at home to share their reactions to the books in class. Similar classroom connections can be made with any of the other programs. When these connections are made, the impact of the program will be far greater than if the workshops are conducted as isolated events.

   c. Review the importance of administrative commitment and support in organizing schoolwide home learning programs. Some of the administrative responsibilities are:

- endorsement of the programs through allocation of resources--money, time, personnel, space;
- recruitment of parents and staff to conduct training (it is best if both are involved);
- personal involvement in at least some of the programs; and
- recognition and reinforcement of staff, parents, and students who participate.

2. Refer participants to ***Handouts #13 through #16.*** State that participants can read these program descriptions at their own leisure. Point out that a contact person is listed for each program, if participants desire more information about the programs.

3. To close the activity at this point, refer participants to ***Handout #17, Have you tried to . . .?*** which gives some useful tips on how to increase family attendance when workshops are held. ***Use T-11 and T-11a.***

Activity #6: Summary and Conclusion

Objective: To have all participants evaluate the usefulness of the workshop

Recommended Time: 10 minutes

Directions and Procedures:

1. Conclude by reviewing the key concepts and purposes of the workshop. Review objectives and how the activities addressed the objectives.

Points to cover:

a. Families provide critical learning environments for children, and children spend much of their waking hours in families and their communities. Teachers through good homework practices and assignments can influence and shape the home learning environment and extend the learning time beyond the classroom.

b. Regular and consistent homework, especially reading, influences children's school achievement.

c. Interactive homework assignments and home learning programs, such as reviewed in this workshop, can give parents vital tools for stimulating learning at home.

d. In developing new homework guidelines, practices and assignments, teachers need to be sensitive to the cultural differences of their students and to develop assignments which allow students to express their diversity and cultural heritage.

e. Maximizing the benefits of high quality homework and home learning activities, will require a concerted effort on the part of the school staff.

f. While most families will support the school in its new homework initiatives, the school may need to create safety nets so that no child will be discriminated against if the family is unable to support the child (such strategies might include establishing a homework center, using volunteers to assist children, developing peer helpers to be homework coaches).

2. Refer participants to ***Handout #18, Homework and Home Learning Resources for Teachers and Families.*** This list of annotated resources will be good ones to add to the school and classroom libraries. Close by asking if there are any final questions, thanking participants for their hard work.

Taking the Next Steps (Optional activity)

Objective: To identify several next steps which need to be taken to strengthen schoolwide homework guidelines and practices and to develop more home learning activities and programs

Recommended Time: 40 minutes

Directions and Procedures:

1. Point out that to implement ideas learned in this workshop will require planning as well as possibly learning new skills. Ask participants what additional information and support they may need to implement some of the ideas presented in the workshop.

2. Briefly present the following points about how the school might go about developing an action plan to strengthen homework and home learning. Use ***T-12*. Allow 5-10 minutes** for discussion.

Strategies to Use In Developing an Action Plan

a. Form a task group of parents, teachers, principal, community members, if one does not already exist, to review current homework guidelines and practices.

b. Use parent and teacher surveys to identify action priorities and training/informational needs. For example, use the ***Homework Evaluation Questionnaire (Handout Sheet #8)*** to solicit parent input on homework.

c. Review the material learned at this workshop as well as school data about the school's current homework guidelines and practices. Information should be based on any recent parent, teacher, or student surveys.

d. Use data about current practices to decide which areas need to be strengthened. For example, identify current rate of return on homework and set an improvement target.

e. Develop a plan of action. The plan should fit with other school priorities. For example, if the school is focusing on implementing a literature-based reading program, home learning programs and activities should also address this theme. If hands-on science is the year's focus, again, develop a variety of programs and approaches that will help parents reinforce this in-school curriculum in the home.

f. Celebrate small gains and changes in homework practices and home learning activities.

g. Evaluate the impact of efforts on parents, students and teachers.

h. Set new goals each year and recognize that developing high quality homework and home learning activities is an ongoing process.

3. State that now participants will have some time to reflect on what has been learned at this workshop and begin developing a plan of action. (Note: if participants are not sitting with other school team members, have them regroup into school teams.)

   a. Refer participants to ***Handout #19***. Have each person individually complete the worksheet on page 1 only. ***Allow 10 minutes.***

   b. Give each team another copy of ***Handout #19 page 1***. Then ask participants to share their ideas with other team members and work together to develop a common group plan on page 2 of ***Handout #19***. If participants are attending the workshop without others from their school, have participants form groups of three and share and discuss each other's action plans. In this way, each participant will leave the workshop having had an opportunity for feedback about their action plan. ***Allow 15-20 minutes.***

4. Close the activity by asking each participant or group to share one next step the group will take after the workshop and one problem or block which will have to be overcome. *(Note: If the group will be returning in the near future for the next workshop, encourage them to bring a progress report on their action steps to the workshop.)*

HOMEWORK AND HOME LEARNING ACTIVITIES FOR STUDENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Transparencies

T-1	Key Concept
T-2	Characteristics of Good Homework Assignments (2 pages)
T-3	Workshop Purpose
T-4	Learner Objectives
T-5	Key Findings About the Impact of Homework on Student Achievement
T-6	Key Findings
T-7	Key Findings
T-8	Key Findings
T-9	Creating Interactive Homework Assignments
T-10	Developing Interactive Homework: Key Questions
T-11	Have You Tried to ...? (2 pages)
T-12	Strategies to Use in Developing a Plan of Action

KEY CONCEPT

Families are more likely to reinforce and extend classroom instruction at home when teachers:

- **give high quality homework assignments;**
- **provide home learning ideas and materials;**
- **guide families in how to help.**

CHARACTERISTICS OF GOOD HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS

- Students know what they are to do and are able to complete assignments successfully.
- Assignments are not too long.
- Students are given a flexible time frame in which to complete assignments (e.g., the weekend).
- Assignments use information and materials that are readily available.
- Assignments reinforce and allow practice of previously taught skills.

CHARACTERISTICS OF GOOD HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS

- Assignments are not just unfinished class work.
- Students find assignments interesting and they lead to further exploration and study.
- Assignments stimulate creativity and imagination in the application of skills.
- Students are encouraged to work together to complete assignments.
- Assignments stimulate home and class discussions about the topic.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this workshop is to assist school staff (principals and teachers) to:

- **develop coherent schoolwide homework guidelines and practices;**
- **implement high quality homework and home learning activities; and**
- **offer home learning programs that engage families and extend children's learning time away from school.**

LEARNER OBJECTIVES

By the end of this workshop, participants will:

- **Define the qualities of good homework assignments.**
- **Understand the research on homework and home learning.**
- **Define the roles and responsibility of school, grade level teams, and individual teachers in regard to homework and home learning activities.**
- **Know how to modify homework assignments to include family interaction.**
- **Identify sample family learning programs**

KEY FINDINGS ABOUT THE IMPACT OF HOMEWORK ON STUDENT LEARNING

- Homework that is well-designed and commented upon has a positive impact on student learning.

  (Cooper, 1989; Walberg, Paschal, and Weinstein, 1985)

- The impact of homework is smallest at the elementary level and greatest at the high school level. (Cooper, 1989)

- Giving regular homework assignments in elementary school positively impacts student persistence with and completion of homework in secondary schools. (Cooper, 1989)

- Homework is most effective if used to reinforce already learned skills.

KEY FINDINGS ABOUT THE IMPACT OF HOMEWORK ON STUDENT LEARNING

- **Homework is taken more seriously by students when teachers prepare written directions, discuss what is to be done, integrate the assignments with classroom instruction, and give a grade for homework.**

  (What Works: Research about Teaching and Learning, 1986)

- **"The assignment and grading of homework done at home produces an effect on achievement that is three times as large as family socioeconomic status, as indexed by parental income, education, and occupation."** (Walberg, 1984, p. 399)

- **Students who perform well on national assessment tests spend more time on homework.**

KEY FINDINGS ABOUT THE IMPACT OF HOMEWORK ON STUDENT LEARNING

- **Asking parents to read to their children or listen to their children read positively effects student reading achievement.**

(Cummins, 1986; Tizard, Schofield, Hewison, 1982; Toomey, 1986; Topping and Wolfendale, 1985)

- **Teachers should consider structuring reading as part of the daily homework schedule, especially for students in upper elementary grades.**

TIME SPENT ON HOMEWORK IN ELEMENTARY GRADES

Elementary students who are having difficulty with class work often also have difficulty with homework, spend more time on homework, and parents offer more help.

(Epstein, 1988)

- **Students who are having difficulty with schoolwork usually require more time and help.**

- **Parents recognize their child is having difficulty and try to help.**

- **Teachers often ask parents of students who are having difficulty to help.**

- **Many of these students are classified as "homework problems" by the teacher.**

CREATING INTERACTIVE HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS

Directions: Rewrite the assignments below to be more interactive and involve family members or friends.

Original Independent Assignment	Family Interactive Assignment
Read the chapter about the Kennedy Presidency and answer the questions.	Read the chapter about the Kennedy Presidency and ...

DEVELOPING INTERACTIVE ASSIGNMENTS: KEY QUESTIONS

- Do interactive assignments meet some of the criteria of a high quality homework assignment? If yes, which ones; if not, why not?
- How can interactive assignments help to create a more meaning-centered curriculum?
- When teachers use such assignments, what are the responses of students, parents?
- When are such assignments appropriate or helpful?
- What problems might be encountered in creating such assignments?
- How should such assignments be counted, commented upon?
- What should be done if the student has no family member who can be involved?

HAVE YOU TRIED TO ...

- Offer programs that meet the needs of all parents.
- Involve a cross-section of parents in planning activities.
- Publicize meetings in a variety of ways.
- Provide adequate advance notice.
- Send timely follow-up reminders.
- Get teachers and students involved.
- Target a particular group of parents. Provide interpreters.

HAVE YOU TRIED TO ...

- Have handouts available in different languages.
- Schedule meetings at times most convenient to parents.
- Set up a telephone tree.
- Provide child care and/or involve children in the program.
- Provide transportation.
- Have door prizes.
- Serve refreshments.
- Evaluate meetings. Make improvements a PRIORITY!

STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPING AN ACTION PLAN

- Form a task group of parents, teachers and principals.
- Use parent, student and teacher surveys to identify action priorities, training, and informational needs.
- Review the material learned at this workshop and other school data.
- Use data about current homework practices to set priorities.
- Develop a plan of action.
- Celebrate small gains and changes in homework practices and home learning activities.
- Evaluate the impact of efforts on parents, students, and teachers.
- Set new goals each year.

Building School-Family Partnerships for Learning: Workshops for Urban Educators

Homework and Home Learning Activities

Participant Handouts

Overview: Key Concepts, Rationale and Purpose, Learner's Objectives

Handouts:

1. Characteristics of High Quality Homework Assignments
2. Key Findings About the Impact of Homework on Student Learning
3. Group Assignments: Developing Schoolwide Guidelines and Practices to Assist Teachers and Families
4. Procedures for Developing School Level Homework Guidelines
5. Homework Letter
6. Parent Tips
7. Critical Questions Regarding Homework
8. Homework Evaluation Questionnaire
9. Ways to Strengthen Homework as a Learning Tool
10. Creating Interactive Homework Assignments
11. TIPS Program
12. PIP TRIPS
13. Family Math
14. Family Science
15. Family Reading
16. Books and Beyond
17. Have You Tried To . . .?
18. Homework and Home Learning Resources for Teachers and Families (annotated publications)
19. Next Steps Planning Sheet

References

OVERVIEW

KEY CONCEPT

Families are more likely to reinforce and extend classroom instruction at home when teachers give high quality homework assignments, provide home learning ideas and materials, and guide families in how to help.

RATIONALE AND PURPOSE

Research has shown that homework given in the elementary grades is an important means of extending children's learning time and building positive study habits which benefit students throughout their academic careers. Teachers' practices critically influence the amount and type of learning activities in which parents engage with their children (Epstein and Becker 1982 a and b; and Epstein and Dauber, 1988). Therefore, teachers need to develop homework assignments that are interesting and appropriate for students. In addition, the school staff needs to become aware of school and classroom factors which promote and hinder parents' involvement in their children's learning at home and work to enhance the promoting factors and eliminate the hindering factors.

Research has also shown that families differ in their approach and ability to assist their children with homework and to engage in home learning activities (Caplan, Choy, and Whitmore, 1992; Clark, 1983; Clark, 1992; Lareau and Benson, 1984). Because of these differences, schools and teachers need to take a more active, coherent, and consistent approach to homework. In addition, teachers need to provide guidance and support to families in ways that will reinforce and enhance family learning practices.

The purpose of this workshop is to assist school staff (principals and teachers) in developing coherent schoolwide homework guidelines, practices, and high quality homework, and in implementing home learning programs that engage families and extend children's learning time away from school.

LEARNER OBJECTIVES

By the end of this workshop, participants will be able to:

1. Define the characteristics of high quality homework assignments;
2. Understand the research on homework and home learning;
3. Define the roles and responsibilities of school, grade level teams, and individual teachers in regard to homework and home learning activities;
4. Know how to modify homework assignments to include family and/or community interaction;
5. Identify sample family learning programs.

Characteristics of High Quality Homework Assignments

Characteristics of the best assignment given:

Some Points to Consider:

- Students know what they are to do and are able to complete the assignment successfully (e.g., about an 85 to 95% success rate).
- Students understand the purpose of the homework, e.g., review, independent practice, application of skills, preparation for next day's class work.
- The assignment is not too long, and students are given adequate (flexible) time in which to complete it, e.g., weekends are included to give working families more time.
- The assignment uses information and materials that are readily available.
- The assignment reinforces and allows for practice of previously taught skills.
- The assignment is not just unfinished class work.
- Students find the assignment interesting and it leads to further exploration and study.
- The assignment stimulates creativity and imagination in the application of skills.
- Students are encouraged to work together to complete assignments.
- The assignments stimulate home and class discussions about the topic.

Handout #2

Key Findings About the Impact of Homework on Student Learning

- Homework that is well-designed and commented upon has a positive impact on student learning (Cooper, 1989; Walberg, Paschal, and Weinstein, 1985).

- The impact of homework is smallest at the elementary level and greatest at the high school level (Cooper, 1989).

- Giving regular homework assignments in elementary school, positively impacts student persistence with and completion of homework in secondary schools (Cooper, 1989).

- Homework is most effective if used to reinforce already learned skills in previous weeks or months.

- Homework is taken more seriously by students when teachers prepare written directions, discuss what is to be done, integrate the assignments with classroom instruction, and give a grade for homework (What Works: Research about Teaching and Learning, 1986).

- "The assignment and grading of homework done at home produces an effect on achievement that is three times as large as family socioeconomic status, as indexed by parental income, education, and occupation" (Walberg, 1984,p.399).

Reading as Homework

- Asking parents to read to their children or listen to their children read, regardless of the language in which the reading occurs, positively effects student reading achievement (Cummins, 1986; Tizard, Schofield, Hewison, 1982; Toomey, 1986; Topping and Wolfendale, 1985).

- Teachers should consider structuring reading as part of the daily homework schedule, especially for students in upper elementary grades.

Time Spent on Homework in Elementary Grades

- Unlike secondary students, elementary students who are having difficulty spend more time on homework and parents offer more help (Epstein, 1988).

- Students who are having difficulty with schoolwork, usually require more time to do the same homework assigned to other students.

- Parents recognize their child is having difficulty and try to help.

- Teachers often ask parents of students who are having difficulty to help.

- Many of these students are classified as "homework problems" by the teacher who interpret the failure to complete homework as non-compliance or non-performance on homework.

- Students classified as "homework problems" often do not like to talk about school or homework, they get tense when doing homework and are more likely to be discipline problems.

Handout #3

Group Assignments

Group 1: Developing school level homework guidelines. The group's task is to review the homework guidelines and procedures in ***Handout #4***. Answer the following questions: 1) How do the six points presented in this "Procedure for Developing School Level Homework Guidelines" compare with your schools' policy, guidelines, and practices? 2) What actions have your schools taken or what actions need to be taken to implement each of these points? Be prepared to report ideas to the total group.

Group 2: Developing schoolwide practices to assist parents. The group's task is to brainstorm ways their schools are currently assisting parents. Review ***Handouts #5-6.*** Discuss how this information can help parents be more informed and supportive of homework. The following are some issues to consider. What other information might parents need and how could this information be shared? How are school and teacher homework expectations communicated to families? Be prepared to report ideas to the total group.

Some possible ideas to discuss are: 1) inform all parents of homework guidelines by printing them on homework folders, including them in student binders, providing them to parents at back to school nights, reviewing them during parent-teacher conferences, developing a video that explains them; 2) offer strategies on how parents can support homework policy through workshops, the school newsletters, and videos; 3) establish a homework telephone hotline where parents and students can call to find out about the homework assignments.

Group 3: Developing schoolwide practices to assist students. The group's task is to brainstorm ways their schools are currently assisting students to be more successful with homework. The following are some issues for the group to discuss. Which strategies have proved most successful? Do students know where to go or what to do for homework help? How do you know homework assignments are developmentally appropriate for each grade level? How is homework handled for non-English speaking students? Be prepared to report ideas to the total group.

Some ideas the group may want to consider are: 1) Provide a homework folder for primary children and a binder for upper grade students. 2) Provide a homework journal or calendar for students to write assignments and parents to use for comments and questions regarding homework. 3) Provide a weekly homework packet which allows students to do homework at own pace during the week and weekend. 4) Teach students study and organizational skills. 5) Help students identify study buddies and groups and show them how to work together to complete homework assignments. 6) Establish an after school homework room for students that is staffed by teachers, parent volunteers or high school students. 7) Ask parents to volunteer their home for study hall for neighborhood children after school.

Group 4: Developing schoolwide practices to assist teachers. The group's task is to brainstorm strategies their schools are currently using to assist teachers to develop quality homework, evaluate homework procedures, and solve homework problems. The following are some issues to consider. How have the purposes of homework been clarified, defined? Do teachers share and communicate with each other about homework assignments? Are homework assignments developmentally appropriate? Is reading at home structured into the homework system? Are schoolwide homework problems discussed and solved at faculty or grade level meetings? ***Handout #7, Critical Questions Regarding Homework,*** summarizes some of the key issues that need to be resolved by the staff. Be prepared to report ideas to the total group.

Some ideas for the group to consider are: 1) Provide opportunities during the summer or other vacation periods for teachers in grade level teams to develop quality homework assignments. 2) Principal supervises, supports, and guides in implementing a consistent schoolwide homework plan. 3) Involve all concerned (teachers, parents, and students) in periodically evaluating homework (***Handout #8, Homework Evaluation Questionnaire).***

Procedure for Developing School Level Homework Guidelines

In order for school and home to make useful and reasonable extension of the child's opportunities for learning, guidelines, which reflects the cooperative nature of homework, should be developed at each school. These guidelines, however, should be flexible enough in its application to meet the diversity of situations in typical school and home life. The following procedure is suggested in developing school level homework guidelines:

A. SELECT A COMMITTEE TO DEVELOP GUIDELINES

Ideally, definite, clear-cut guidelines on homework should be developed by the principal, teacher-representatives, parent representatives, and where appropriate, student representatives. Input from the entire staff should be considered and suggestions from the broader parent community should be sought. The school guidelines need to conform with district level homework policy, if one exists.

B. ESTABLISH GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

One of the first tasks of the committee is to review the research on homework and to agree upon the purposes for assigning homework. When the purposes have been agreed upon, these purposes should give direction to the homework guidelines by suggesting goals and objectives that will be addressed in the guidelines.

From the parents' point of view it often appears that the children, when they are not in school, spend a disproportionate amount of time with things of little consequence. It would seem logical, then, to propose that the work of the school extend into these after school hours. Homework can be an appropriate way to extend the learning time, enable children to develop independence and personal responsibility.

C. DECIDE A TIME SCHEDULE

Sound homework guidelines will ensure that children are not overburdened with homework assignments. It is evident that there is no single time schedule that will be suitable for all schools or even the same school over a period of time. Even so, in developing homework guidelines, the committee may wish to consider what many authorities believe to be a maximum total time allotment suitable for the majority of youngsters, assuming the other criteria for sound homework assignments have been met.

Primary Grades	(1-3)	Max.	45 minutes per day
Upper Elementary	(4-6)	Max.	60 minutes per day
Junior High		Max.	90 minutes per day

D. EMPHASIZE THE NEED FOR EVALUATION

Knowing that homework is a teaching rather than a testing process, homework guidelines must always reflect the need for checking or evaluating the finished product. Naturally each check-up will vary, but at least one of four approaches need to be used:
1) recognize pupil's efforts and make comments about the finished work;
2) allow students to share what has been done with others;
3) make students aware of the strengths and weaknesses of their efforts;
4) develop an appraisal system so that students can make their own comparative evaluations.

E. MAKE DECISIONS CONCERNING GRADING

Reward for homework should be predetermined and decisions concerning grades or rewards would be shared with both parents and students. It is not uncommon for parents and students to be told at reporting time that the child's low-grade or failure is due to incomplete homework assignments. This is too late in the process.

Many educators agree that if students are required to do homework, they should be rewarded for their efforts. However, it is suggested that homework efforts count toward a moderate portion of the overall grade. If rewards are too high, or undue value is placed on the home assignment, unhealthy practices could result.

F. COMMUNICATE GUIDELINES

A key factor in the effectiveness of homework is home-school communications. At all levels and especially at the elementary level, **it is imperative that the guidelines be given to parents in writing**. The homework guidelines should be reviewed regularly with teachers, parents, and students. When all concerned know exactly what is expected, homework can both a powerful learning tool and a rewarding experience as students see themselves mastering new skills.

Adapted from and reprinted with permission from Information and Guidelines for Developing a Homework Policy, Caddo Parish Schools, Shreveport LA 1981.

Sample Homework Letter to Parents (Elementary)

Dear Parents,

Homework is very important to your child's success in school. The teacher will send home assignments four days a week. Kindergarten through third grade students should spend about 15 to 30 minutes a day on homework. Fourth through sixth grade students should spend 30 to 45 minutes a day. You can help your child be successful with homework and avoid homework hassles by using some of the following suggestions and tips.

1. Help your child establish a regular time and place for doing homework.
2. Turn off the TV when it is family homework time.
3. Try to have a quiet time and place with good lighting for doing homework: the kitchen table is fine.
4. Ask to see your child's homework folder or assignment calendar each day. Talk about what your child is learning in school
5. Make suggestions in a positive way such as, "The teacher will understand your ideas better if you write in your best handwriting."
6. Ask your child to explain what he or she is to do. Often talking through an assignment will help the child to understand what is to be done.
7. If your child is stuck, ask him or her to write a question that they would ask their teacher. Sometimes by writing or thinking of questions to ask about what is not understood, your child will be able to solve the problem.
8. Contact the teacher by phone, note, or in person when your child is having trouble with homework assignments. Don't fight with your child about homework.
9. Help your child get and complete make-up assignments when he or she is absent. Call the school and ask for assignments.
10. Help with assignments by checking for completeness, neatness, and accuracy.
11. Establish a place where completed homework is placed (for example, by the front door in a box) so that it won't be forgotten when your child leaves for school.

Be positive. Encourage and praise your child's efforts.

With your support and help, I know your child will have a successful year.

Sincerely,

Handout #6

HOMEWORK TIPS FOR PARENTS

HOW CAN I HELP MY CHILD WITH HIS/HER HOMEWORK?

Show that you are interested in what your child is learning in school:

- ✏ Look at the assignments that your child is completing
- ✏ Examine completed work that your child brings home from school.
- ✏ PRAISE YOUR CHILD FOR HIS/HER EFFORTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS.
- ✏ Display particularly good papers in your home.
- ✏ Be tolerant of homework not being done perfectly - your child is learning many new skills that are not perfected yet.

HOW CAN WE AVOID THE "HOMEWORK HASSLES"?

Problem 1: My child says that he/she doesn't have homework, but the teacher says that homework is not being turned in.

★ A note will come home when homework is not assigned.

Problem 2: Occasionally the work my child brings home is too difficult and I am not sure how to teach it to my child.

★ Homework should be material that has been taught in class. Your child should be familiar with the assignment before it comes home.

★ You are not expected to introduce new material to your child.

★ Write a note on the paper and send it back to school.

Problem 3: I have other things to do, I can't spend 30 minutes to an hour with my child.

★ Fine. Get your child started on his/her homework.

★ Check back in 10-15 minutes to be sure that he/she is still working.

★ When all work is done, check for completion - PRAISE your child for his/her effort.

Problem 4: My child will simply NOT do his/her homework.

★ Please contact your child's teacher so you can discuss a possible plan of action.

Problem 5: What if my child is consistently working longer than the suggested time?

★ Please communicate this concern to your child's teacher so you can discuss possible causes and solutions.

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Critical Questions Regarding Homework

Districts and schools have begun to recognize the importance of homework and have initiated district and school homework guidelines, assignment calendars, homework hotlines and study centers. However, there are a number of critical questions that need to be answered by the school staff, such as:

1. What constitutes a good homework assignment?
2. Does the homework assignment provide for successful independent practice by the student?
3. If the student is non-English speaking, is the homework in the language of the student?
4. Are students able to complete homework assignments with an 85% to 90% success rate? (Research indicates that to be effective, students, especially in the elementary grades, need to be able to complete assignments with this success rate. This means that uncompleted class work may be inappropriate, especially if the student did not complete it because he/she did not understand and the work.)
5. For elementary students are at least 15 minutes of reading included as part of daily homework assignments?
6. Are parental and student expectations made clear and communicated regularly?
7. Are assignments appropriate in nature and duration based on the grade level of students?
8. Do teachers share and communicate with each other about homework assignments?
9. Do parents and students know where to go for homework help?
10. Are schoolwide homework problems discussed and solved (e.g., developing and implementing a consistent homework policy, providing workshops for teachers and parents to help them address homework concerns, developing schoolwide systems such as homework folders and assignment calendars)?

Homework Evaluation Questionnaire

Dear Parents:

Help us evaluate our homework guidelines. We need to know what you think. We are asking your children to do homework four nights a week for 20-30 minutes if they are in grades kindergarten through third, or 30-45 minutes if in grades fourth through sixth.

Please take a few minutes to answer these questions. We will share the results in our next newsletter so you will know what other parents are thinking, too. The classes with the most surveys returned will receive a treat. You may complete a survey for each child you have in school.

______ ____ Grade level of child

1. My child spends about ______________ minutes each night on homework.

2 I think this amount is _____ too little, ______ about right, _____ too much, _____don't know.

3. My child usually understands what he or she is to do for homework?_______ yes ________ no

4. My child is usually able to complete most homework assignments by him or herself?
___ ___ never _______ sometimes _______ always

5. My child accepts doing most homework assignments?
_______ yes _____ no _____ don't know

6. Getting my child to do or complete homework assignments is a problem?
___________never, ___________ sometimes, __________ always.

7. My child needs more help with homework than I can provide?
_________ never, ___________ sometimes, __________ always.

8. I am satisfied with the type of homework my child is assigned? _______ yes _______ no

9. I think my child's homework assignments are helping to develop my child's independent study skills?
_____ yes ______ no ________ don't know

10. I would attend a workshop on how to help my child with homework?
_______ yes _____ no

11. I would like suggestions of games, books or other learning activities to do with my child?
_______ yes _____ no

12. Suggestions and ideas I have about homework I want to share with the teachers:

____

____

____

Ways to Strengthen Homework as a Learning Tool

The following are a list of ways that schools can strengthen homework as a learning tool.

1) Involve parents and teachers in developing schoolwide homework guidelines (Handout #4).

2) Inform all parents of the guidelines by printing them on homework folders, including them in student binders, providing them to parents at back to school nights, reviewing them during parent-teacher conferences and sending individual class letters to parents about homework (Handouts #5-6).

3) Ask parents, students and teachers to sign a homework contract that defines the obligations of each person.

4) Provide a homework folder for primary children and a binder for upper grade students.

5) Provide a homework journal or calendar for students to write assignments and parents to use for comments and questions regarding homework.

6) Teach students study and organizational skills.

7) Help students identify study buddies and groups and show them how to work together to complete homework assignments.

6) Provide opportunities for parents to learn how to assist with homework by offering workshops, sharing tips in the school newsletters, (Handout #6), developing videos to demonstrate homework help strategies, and establishing homework hotlines.

7) Establish an after school homework room for students that is staffed by teachers, parent volunteers or high school students.

8) Ask parents to volunteer their home for study hall for neighborhood children after school.

9) Provide opportunities for teachers in grade level teams to develop quality homework assignments that provide for independent practice and extended learning opportunities.

10) Provide principal supervision, support, and guidance in implementing a consistent schoolwide homework plan.

11) Periodically discuss some of the critical questions about homework outlined in Handout #7.

16) Involve all concerned (teachers, parents, and students) in periodically evaluating the homework (Handout #8).

These Activity Sheets have been drawn from Chrispeels, Boruta, and Daugherty, (1988) *Communicating with Parents*, San Diego County Office of Education, San Diego, CA, and from(1991) Parents Empowering Parents, (Los Angeles CA: California State Parents-Teachers-Association.

Handout #10

Creating Interactive Homework Assignments

Directions: Rewrite the assignments below to be more interactive and involve family members or friends.

Original Independent Assignment	Family Interactive Assignment
1. Read the chapter about the Kennedy Presidency and answer the questions.	Read the chapter about the Kennedy Presidency and . . .
2. Do problems 1,3,5,7 on measurement, using both English and metric units.	
3. Complete the questions on the worksheet about weather.	
4. Write ten sentences using this week's spelling words. (Or read the story on pages ______ in your reader and answer the questions.)	

TEACHERS INVOLVE PARENTS IN SCHOOLWORK (TIPS): INVOLVING FAMILIES TO IMPROVE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Joyce L. Epstein

WHY BUILD SCHOOL AND FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS?

If enough studies show the same result, you begin to believe it. That is how it is with school and family partnerships. Research shows that parent involvement improves student achievement, attitudes, homework, report card grades, and aspirations. Surveys of parents show that most families want to be able to talk with, monitor, encourage, and guide their children as students, but they say they need more information from the schools about how to help their children at home.

Studies also show that when teachers guide involvement and interaction, more parents become involved in ways that benefit their children. For example, when teachers frequently use practices to involve families in reading, students gain more in reading than do similar students whose teachers do not involve families. This suggests an important connection between parent involvement in particular subjects and student success in those subjects. It also shows the important roles teachers play in helping families become involved in schoolwork at home.

There are other benefits to school and family partnerships. When parents are assisted by the schools, they become more aware of their children's education and they interact with their children more. Children see that their parents and teachers communicate. They become more aware that they can talk to someone at home about schoolwork and school decisions.

Based on research that links teachers' practices of involving families with more success for students, we developed a process that enables teachers to do this easily: TIPS -- Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork. There are two TIPS processes -- one that increases parent involvement *at home* on interactive homework assignments, and one that increases parent involvement *at school* as volunteers.

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT AT HOME: TIPS INTERACTIVE HOMEWORK IN MATH, SCIENCE & HEALTH, AND LANGUAGE ARTS

Of all the types of involvement, the one that more parents want to know about is: **How do I help my own child at home?** This request is at the top of parents' wish lists, as they want to do their part to help their children succeed in school each year. This most wanted involvement is one that schools often have had difficulty organizing. It requires every teacher at every grade level to communicate with families about how to work and interact with their children on learning at home.

To meet this need, teachers helped to design, implement, and test a process called Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork (TIPS) for interactive homework. With TIPS, any teacher can help all families stay informed and involved in their children 's learning activities at home. With TIPS, students complete homework that should promote their success in school.

TIPS activities are **homework assignments that require students to talk to someone at home about something interesting that they are learning in class.** TIPS helps solve some important problems with homework. It enables all families to become involved, not just those who already know how to discuss math, science, or other subjects. The homework is the students' responsibility; parents are not asked to "teach" subjects or skills. TIPS requires students to share their work, ideas, and progress with their families. It asks families to comment on their children's work and to request other information from teachers in a section for home-to-school communications. With TIPS, homework becomes a three-way partnership involving students, families, and teachers.

One immediate result of this is that families recognize and appreciate the efforts of teachers to keep them informed and involved. The TIPS activities keep school on the agenda at home so that children know that their families believe schoolwork is important and worth talking about.

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

Jump burdle 1: Homework should NOT always be done alone.

Some teachers believe that all homework should be completed in a quiet place, away from the family or other people. Its purpose is to allow students to practice what was taught in class, to study for a quiz, or to complete other work *on their own*. While SOME homework is for these purposes, OTHER homework should fulfill other goals. TIPS homework -- once a week in math or language arts, twice a month in science -- is designed specifically to keep students and their families talking about schoolwork at home. More than quarterly report cards, or lists of required skills, or other occasional explanations, TIPS brings school home on a regular schedule of homework that requires children to talk with their parents and other family members.

Jump burdle 2: Just any homework won't do.

Some homework is pretty boring; it requires students' time, but not much thinking. TIPS activities must be challenging and engaging -- the type of homework that students will want to explain and share with their families. TIPS includes higher level thinking skills and interactions with family members that make students think, write, gather information, collect suggestions, explain, demonstrate, draw, sketch or construct things, and conduct other interactive activities with parents and other family members at home.

WHAT ARE TIPS ACTIVITIES?

TIPS prototype activities are examples that teachers can use to design homework that matches the learning objectives for their students. There are TIPS prototype activities in math, science & health, and language arts.

TIPS MATH provides a format for students to share what they are learning about a specific math skill. The TIPS format allows students to show parents exactly how they learned a skill in class. Then, they complete regular math homework activities, and obtain reactions from parents. TIPS Math emphasizes the mastery of math skills -- basic and advanced. The activities may include challenges in games or other extensions of skills, or finding examples of the specific math skill in real life. TIPS Math homework should be assigned once a week to keep students and families talking about math at home on a regular schedule.

TIPS SCIENCE and HEALTH provides a format for students to conduct and discuss a hands-on "lab" or data collection activity related to the science topics they study in class. In health, TIPS requires students to discuss topics, gather reactions, or collect data from family members on issues of health and student development. The hands-on science activities and interactive health assignments help students and their families see that these subjects are enjoyable, enriching, and part of every day life.

In science, it is important that TIPS activities require only inexpensive or no-cost materials that are readily available at home. Special equipment, if it is ever needed, should be provided by the school. The TIPS Science and Health activities include a brief letter to parents explaining the topic. Then, the activities outline objectives, materials, space for lab reports or data charts, challenges, discussion questions, conclusions, and home-to-school communications. TIPS Science and Health homework should be assigned on a regular schedule (e.g., once a week or twice a month) to keep students and families discovering and talking about science and health at home.

TIPS LANGUAGE ARTS provides a format for students to share a variety of skills in writing, reading, thinking, grammar, and related language activities. The students do the work -- reading and writing -- but students and parents enjoy thinking together, discussing, sharing, and exchanging ideas. Family members may listen to what their children write, help students edit their writing, think about words, react to writing, provide ideas, memories, and their own experiences, and other interactions. TIPS Language Arts homework should be assigned once a week or every other week to keep families aware of and involved in students' work and progress in language arts.

Some of the examples may be useful just as they are. But, because homework must match the teachers' learning objectives, most teachers will use the examples to help them design their own TIPS activities. After several years of development, TIPS now can be easily adopted or adapted. Teachers who see the activities usually say, "I can do that!" That is exactly the reaction that will help every teacher in every grade level and every subject design interactive homework for their students and families.

See. Manual for Teachers: Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork (TIPS) Math and Science Interactive Homework in the Elementary Grades (revised 1992). J.L. Epstein and K.C. Salinas, and **Manual for Teachers: Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork (TIPS) Language Arts and Science/Health Interactive Homework in the Middle Grades (1992).** Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, Center on Families, Communities, Schools and Children's Learning.

SAMPLE -- TIPS SCIENCE GRADE 6

S6-9

Name: ______________________ Class: __________ Date: ____________

LIVING IN WATER -- FRESH AND SALT WATER MIXTURES

Dear Parent or Guardian,

We are observing what happens when salt water meets fresh water. This is an activity that will help build science skills in observing, predicting, and drawing conclusions. I hope you enjoy this activity with me. This assignment is due ______________________.

Sincerely,

____

OBJECTIVE: To test and describe what happens when fresh water is mixed with salt water.

MATERIALS: 2 same sized glasses half filled with water. Let them stand overnight.
4 teaspoons of salt   colored markers or crayons
1 teaspoon of grape juice, other dark juice, or several drops of food coloring

LAB REPORT

PROCEDURE:

1. Predict what will happen when salt water is mixed with fresh water. ______________________

____

2. Place the two glasses of fresh water on a table or counter.

3. Put 4 teaspoons of salt in one glass and stir until the salt is dissolved.

4. To color the salt water, add one teaspoon of juice or several drops of food coloring. Stir the mixture until it is evenly colored. Color ONLY the salt water.

5. Draw below the two glasses as they appear when you begin the activity.

FRESH WATER	SALT WATER

6. Now, pour **half** of the **salt water SLOWLY** into the fresh water. **CAUTION:** **Do not mix or shake** the glass you have just added the salt water to.

7. Wait ONE MINUTE. Observe the glass from the side.

8. Draw a picture of the salt water and the fresh water after they are mixed together.

SALT WATER INTO FRESH WATER MIXTURE

CONCLUSIONS: Explain the experiment to your family member and discuss your conclusions together. Write complete sentences. **Who is working with you?** __________

1. Based on your observation, write a statement that describes what happens when salt water and fresh water are mixed.

____

____

2. Why do you think you got the results that you did?

____

____

3. What do you think would happen if you **poured the fresh water into the salt water?**

____

____

4. **TRY THIS!** Start again with clean materials and use the same procedures as before. This time **color the fresh water** and pour half of it into the salt water. Report what you observe.

____

____

HOME-TO-SCHOOL COMMUNICATION:

Dear Parent,

Please give me your reactions to your child's work on this activity.

Write YES or NO for each statement.

______ 1. My child understood the homework and was able to discuss it.

______ 2. My child and I enjoyed the activity.

______ 3. This assignment helped me know what my child is learning in science.

Any other comments: ______________________________

____

Parent Signature ______________________________

65 Battery Street, Third Floor
San Francisco, CA 94111
(415) 274-0250

Parent Involvement Project

The Parent Involvement Project of the San Francisco School Volunteers will provide you, as parents of kindergartners, with ways you can help your children at home by working with them on simple, enjoyable activities. The activities will come home regularly in a PIP(Parent Involvement Project)TRIP box.

Sometimes the activity can be done with materials in the box; other times, the activity can be done with simple things around you.

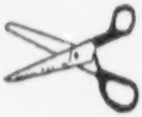
The teacher will tell your child when the boxes go home and when they are to be brought back to school. We hope that sometimes you'll come in and share with the teacher how the activity went.

Try to put aside a special time for your PIPTRIP activity. Have fun!

home+school

The Parent Involvement Project of San Francisco School Volunteers is funded through the generosity of Citibank, the Koret Foundation, and The Roberts Foundation.

65 Battery Street, Third Floor
San Francisco, CA 94111
(415) 274-0250



PIPTRIP: Our Special Box

Dear Parents,

Inside the PIPTRIP box are some supplies. Use these with your child to decorate your box in any you wish. You may want to :

- color the suitcase with the crayons
- cut magazine pictures out and paste them on
- paste on family photos
- paste on silly words or cartoons
- use "found" objects--things around the house like pieces of ribbon, wrapping paper, labels from cans or bottles
- do whatever you feel is fun and pretty!

The Parent Involvement Project of San Francisco School Volunteers is funded through the generosity of Citibank, the Koret Foundation, and The Roberts Foundation.

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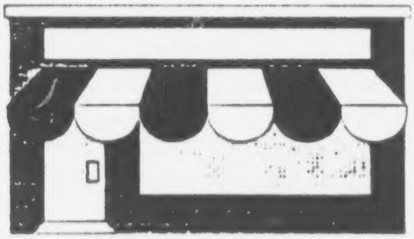

PIPTRIP: To the Market We Go

Dear Parents,

During your next trip to the market, take your kindergarten child along. This is a good time to be together, and it is also a good time to help your child learn about words, colors, and numbers. You might do one of these:

- As you walk through the aisles, ask your child to look for things that are the same color (example: "Look for red things"; on another day, "Look for green things.").
- Ask your child to count out fruits or vegetables as they're put into the bag.
- Point to various items and ask your child to name them.
- Ask your child to find the "biggest" vegetable--also the smallest.
- Ask your child to find something round, something square, something rectangle.

The Parent Involvement Project of San Francisco School Volunteers is funded through the generosity of Citibank, the Koret Foundation, and The Roberts Foundation.

FAMILY MATH

Contact
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What is FAMILY MATH?

FAMILY MATH is a way for parents and children to enjoy doing mathematics together. Many parents would like to help their children with math but don't know how to begin or what to do. FAMILY MATH developed from the efforts of the EQUALS project at the Lawrence Hall of Science at the University of California, Berkeley. In working with teachers to help them improve the teaching and learning of mathematics in the classrooms, the EQUALS staff discovered that the teachers also wanted ideas and materials for parents to use at home. Thus, the creation of a separate program: FAMILY MATH.

A typical FAMILY MATH course consists of six or eight, one and a half to two hour, sessions. Each session gives parents and children (kindergarten through grade eight) opportunities to develop problem-solving skills and to build an understanding of mathematics through hands-on activities. The focus on problem-solving is in line with changes in the national standards for mathematics education and with new approaches that being used in classroom mathematics instruction.

What does FAMILY MATH hope to achieve?

FAMILY MATH hopes to help parents and their students, especially girls and students from diverse ethnic and low-income families, overcome their math phobias and recognize that all students need good math skills. The classes are designed to make learning math fun and relevant to the lives of students. The program is also designed to give parents and children an opportunity to learn together in a supportive and relax atmosphere with other families. FAMILY MATH also provides parents with easy ways they can reinforce math skills as they go about daily activities in their home.

How can FAMILY MATH be started?

There are two ways the program can be initiated. One approach is to purchase the FAMILY MATH book from the FAMILY MATH program. The book, available in both English and Spanish, provides an introduction to the program, descriptions of the activities for each type of mathematics, as well as an appendix on how to organize the classes.

A second approach is to send a team of teachers and parents (or a community volunteer) to a training session. Contact the EQUALS project to find out who in your region or state has been trained and could conduct such a training. The two day training enables parents and teachers to experience the fun of family math activities, to develop learning materials to take home and use in their own classes, and to plan the first two FAMILY MATH classes.

How much does the FAMILY MATH program cost?
The FAMILY MATH book cost $15.00. Some additional funds would be needed for supplies to conduct the hands-on activities (e.g. beads, blocks, measurement tools), but these costs are not high. There is also a 17 minute film showing scenes from several FAMILY MATH classes available in both English and Spanish. It provides full instructions and activities for parents and their children to do at home or in class as well as information on how to set up a FAMILY MATH course. If a training session is organized, some additional costs would be involved. The San Diego County Office of Education which has been sponsoring trainer of trainers sessions for several years charges $60 per participant. This charge includes a copy of the FAMILY MATH book.

How should FAMILY MATH classes be organized?
FAMILY MATH classes are usually taught by grade levels (k-2, 3-4; 5-6; 7-9), although variations occur depending on size of the school and staff available to conduct sessions. A typical class lasts about one and a half to two hours. Usually four to six classes are offered. Topics included in most classes are arithmetic, geometry, probability and statistics, measurement, estimation, and logical thinking. These are all concepts covered throughout the K-8 curriculum. Stimulating and fun mathematics activities are used to address each of these topics.

Parents in FAMILY MATH classes are also given overviews of the mathematics topics at their children's grade levels and explanations of how these topics relate to each other. In addition, men and women working in math-based careers and occupations come to FAMILY MATH classes to talk about how math is used in their jobs. Career activities used in FAMILY MATH also help families to see the importance of children acquiring a good foundation in math at each grade level.

How can the program be linked to the school curriculum and classrooms?
- Teachers can use some of the FAMILY MATH activities in class.
- Students who have attended the FAMILY MATH classes could be asked to share them with classmates.
- Teachers can send home FAMILY MATH activities as an occasional home learning assignment.
- Teachers can take responsibility for contacting parents of students in their class and personally inviting them to attend FAMILY MATH classes.
- FAMILY MATH activities can be shared as part of a home visit program.
- FAMILY MATH puzzles or activities can be published in the school newsletter.
- Parents who attend FAMILY MATH classes can be invited to class to conduct math activities with the whole class.
- Guest speakers at FAMILY MATH classes can also be invited to make presentations to classes at school.

Family Science

Contact:
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Northwest EQUALS Project
PSU/OCE
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Portland, OR 97207
(503) 725-3045

What is FAMILY SCIENCE?

FAMILY SCIENCE is an innovative program designed to teach science skills by having children and parents learn and enjoy science together. The program seeks to increase the study of science by all students, but especially among female and minority students.

The program was modeled after the highly successful FAMILY MATH program developed by the EQUALS project at the Lawrence Hall of Science. The development of FAMILY SCIENCE was funded by a three-year, $325,000 grant from Chevron to the Northwest EQUALS of Portland Oregon. Major partners in the creation of the program were the National Urban Coalition of Washington, D.C., an organization of community-based groups dedicated to educating urban minority youth, and the national EQUALS program at the Lawrence Hall of Science in Berkeley, California.

The program consists of a series of four to six classes for parents and their children that are held at a convenient location such as at school, in a community center or a church. Family involvement is key to the FAMILY SCIENCE program.

The program has activities appropriate for students grades kindergarten through eighth grade and children of different grade levels can be accommodated in one workshop.

What does FAMILY SCIENCE hope to achieve?

The goal of FAMILY SCIENCE is to develop science skills in a new generation of American students. The program seeks to demonstrate the relevance of science to a student's future, and improve a child's self-image as a learner of science. The program utilizes imaginative hands-on learning activities to stimulate student interest in science. These activities, which used easy-to-find and inexpensive materials from around the home, will supplement the school science curriculum.

How can the program be started?

The best way to initiate FAMILY SCIENCE is to ask the district or a regional resource center to sponsor the two-day, ten hour FAMILY SCIENCE training workshop, and to send a team of parents and teachers to the workshop.

If it is not possible to organize a training in your area, contact the FAMILY SCIENCE project and purchase the FAMILY SCIENCE book. By spending time studying the examples in the book and selecting appropriate activities, teachers and parents, who feel comfortable with science, should be able to host the FAMILY SCIENCE classes or workshops.

How much does the program cost?
The FAMILY SCIENCE book will sell for approximately $20 when it is available in 1992. It can be ordered from any of the EQUALS affiliates and will be distributed through several educational catalogues. A training will cost $1000 for 12-20 participants, plus the cost of the books, travel and per diem expenses for the trainer. Schools would also need to budget a small amount of money for supplies and funds to cover the costs of stipends or substitute time for teachers to attend the training and conduct the workshops.

How should the FAMILY SCIENCE sessions be organized?
It is best to plan a series of four to six workshops, inviting families to come with their children. Approximately 12 to 15 families, depending on the number of siblings who attend, is an ideal number for two workshop leaders to coordinate. This allows time for interaction and discussion of experiments and time for families to get to know each other. The sessions have been successfully held in a variety of settings: the school, a community center, a church, or once a month as part of a family scout meeting. The series can be offered in a variety of time frames: once a week, once every other week, once a month. While the workshops can include children in a variety of grade levels, the workshops can also be targeted to one or two grade levels at a time.

How can the program be linked to the school curriculum and classrooms?
- Teachers can demonstrate some of the FAMILY SCIENCE experiments in class.
- Students who have attended the FAMILY SCIENCE workshops and tried experiments at home could be asked to share them with classmates.
- Teachers can send a single FAMILY SCIENCE experiment home as an occasional home learning assignment.
- Teachers can take responsibility for contacting parents of students in their class and personally inviting them to attend FAMILY SCIENCE nights.
- FAMILY SCIENCE experiments can be shared as part of a home visit program.
- Science experiments can be displayed on school or class bulletin boards.
- Parents who attend FAMILY SCIENCE workshops can be invited to class to demonstrate an experiment.
- Guest speakers at FAMILY SCIENCE workshops can be invited to share their expertise with classrooms.

Family Reading

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What is Family Reading?

FAMILY READING is an intergenerational approach to building family literacy through children's literature and interactive reading strategies. Parents are invited to attend a series of four to ten workshops that explore a range children's literature and help parents learn ways to read and discuss books with their children. The books include folk tales, family stories, oral family traditions, poetry, imaginative books, wordless picture books, and nonfiction on science and social studies topics. The reading strategies that parents are taught are straight forward and simple, yet they tap and develop higher order thinking skills.

Each workshop consists of six components: reporting on home reading; introduction of a children's book; demonstration of a reading strategy; practice of the strategy in pairs using the children's book; group discussion; preparation for reading at home and book borrowing. Frequently, parents also read to children in school at the conclusion of the workshop.

The program is primarily designed for parents and children from preschool to third grade. However, just as parents enjoy the beautiful illustrations and texts of primary children's literature, experience has shown that the books appeal to all members of the family, including older siblings. An important feature of the program is the applicability of the reading strategies to readers of all ages. In addition, adaptations for older children can be made by selecting grade-appropriate books.

What does Family Reading hope to achieve?

FAMILY READING has a two-pronged goal: to enable parents to read, discuss, and enjoy books with their children, thereby developing their children's reading skills; and to develop the adult reading competencies of parents and other caretakers. The workshop model, which has been nationally recognized by the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy, views reading as a meaning-making activity that occurs in a social context and that builds relationships between the generations and between home and school.

Evaluation of the program in Newark, New Jersey, where there are 23 school sites participating in the program, indicates that parents are supporting the literacy development of their children by reading more to children, discussing books, visiting the library, and valuing the importance of reading. The adults are developing their own literacy skills, seeking out books for themselves, and in many cases, pursing additional education or employment. The family closeness engendered by the project is especially prized. Teachers report increased reading by students and better home-school relationships.

How can a Family Reading program be started?

The Family Reading program can be initiated in one of three ways. First, an interested district or region can contact the developers and contract with them to conduct a training session. Alternatively, a staff developer familiar with conducting workshops and with reading programs can purchase the training materials from New Readers Press, Department 2, Box 131, Syracuse, NY 13210.

A third approach would be for a staff developer to attend a training sessions that is being conducted by another district. For example, San Diego City and County schools have implemented the program extensively. Two or three times a year training of trainers sessions are conducted.

How much does the Family Reading program cost?
The FAMILY READING Training Set published by New Readers Press, costs $258.00. It includes a training video, photocopy masters (single copy price is $49.50), trainers manual (single copy prince is $7.00), teacher's guide (single copy price is $10.50), five copies of two of the children's books used in the program and one copy eight other books. Some training materials are also supplied under contract with the program developers.

Children's books are the major cost. Since each workshop presents a specific book, at lease 20 copies of that book need to be purchased so that parents can borrow it for home reading. San Diego Unified (CA), which is extensively implementing the program, has invested $12,000 in sets of children's literature in English and Spanish to assist schools in implementing the program. Schools wishing to implement the program can check out sets of books to use in their workshops and loan to parents. Schools can lower implementation costs by teaming with other schools to buy and then exchange sets of books. Public libraries are sources for supplemental books that parents and children may wish to borrow. Schools also can seek support from local community groups for book purchases.

How should the training sessions be organized?
To have an impact, a series of at least four workshops should be conducted. The series can be offered once a week or once every other week. This length and timing builds a momentum for the parents and they can begin to see the impact at home. The workshops are designed to be conducted with the parents. Their children can be involved in several ways. If the sessions are held during the day, parents can join their child and others in the classroom for a reading session at the conclusion of the workshop. If the sessions are conducted in the evening, parents and children can come together. After refreshments, the children go to a classroom where they are read stories while the parents receive the training. Children then join their parents for a family reading session. Alternatively, parents receive the training and then return home to enjoy the books with their children at home. All three methods have been used with success.

How can the program be linked to the school and classroom curriculum?
Since more and more schools are moving to a literature-based approach to reading, the link between Family Reading and the school curriculum is a natural.

- Teachers can reinforce the reading strategies in class as they introduce different types of children's literature.
- Students whose parents have attended the workshops can be asked to share the books they are reading with the whole class.
- Teachers can take responsibility for contacting parents of students in their class and personally inviting them to attend the Family Reading workshops.
- Family Reading strategies and books can be shared as part of a home visit program.
- Book jacket covers, family writing activities that are part of the reading program and other art work related to books can be displayed in the hallways and classrooms.
- A synopsis of a Family Reading selection and the reading strategy can be shared with parents in the school newsletter.
- Parents who attend Family Reading workshops can be invited to class to share a book with the whole class, just as they are doing with their child at home.
- Authors of children's books can be invited to share at a school assembly as part of an authors' fair.
- The school library can feature the type of children's literature that is being used as the focus of each Family Reading workshop.

BOOKS AND BEYOND

Contact

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BOOKS AND BEYOND
Solana Beach School District
309 North. Rios Avenue
Solana Beach, CA 92075
(619) 755-8000 or 755-6319
FAX (619) 755-0814

What is BOOKS AND BEYOND?

BOOKS AND BEYOND is a home-based reading program designed to increase students' recreational reading and decrease indiscriminate TV viewing. Through success oriented reading incentive strategies, this highly motivating program produces positive long-lasting behavioral changes in students with regard to recreational reading. Success for each individual student is assured because the program is self-paced and allows for individual differences. Through parent education and student self-monitoring techniques, project participants become more aware of their TV viewing habits and learn to become discriminate TV viewers.

The program is suitable for students kindergarten through ninth grade, and can encompass students at all reading levels---gifted to remedial—and from a variety of socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. Because of the variety of strategies and design of the program, schools can easily tailor it to meet their needs and fit with their curriculum. The program is included as an National Diffusion Network, Developer/Demonstrator Project and is widely in use in over 3000 school districts around the country.

What does BOOKS AND BEYOND hope to achieve?

The program has two primary goals: increase students' time spent and enjoyment from recreational reading, and decrease the amount of time spent watching television. BOOKS AND BEYOND if implemented schoolwide, also can enable the school to begin building a community of readers by involving not just students, but teachers, principal, support staff and parents as well. The initial evaluation of the program showed that these goals can be met. Students participating in the program themselves reported a 31% increase in the average number of books read, a 37% decrease in television viewing and a 13% increase in their scope of reading. Parents of participants reported that their children spent approximately 37% more time in recreational reading activities than was reported by the parents of comparison students. Teachers also reported similar benefits. Both the school and local library reported an increase in circulation of books.

How can BOOKS AND BEYOND be started?

The BOOKS AND BEYOND program can be initiated by purchasing the manuals, which provide all information and materials needed for successful implementation. Directions are clear and concise, graphics for bulletin board displays make reproduction easy, and suggestions for adaptations and modifications provide additional flexibility.

The program can be implemented on a classroom or schoolwide basis. Program implementation is greatly facilitated by having an overall coordinator of the program, perhaps the school librarian or media center teacher, and a core of willing parent volunteers to assist teachers in record keeping, posting of school reading progress, and awarding incentives.

If desired, a school, district, or regional training program can be organized by contacting the developer. It is recommended that a training team of four from each school should participate in the training sessions: the library / media center teacher, a key teacher or administrator, and two parent volunteers.

How much does BOOKS AND BEYOND cost?
The BOOKS AND BEYOND manuals cost $40 per year. Six manuals addressing the following themes are available: Travel Through Time, Jog America, Quest for Knowledge, Sports Decathlon, Around the World with Books, Mysteries of the Deep. The manuals include paper awards that can be reproduced. Other awards are available from BOOKS and BEYOND. The awards average $25 per 100 with the average cost per pupil being about $1.25. Schools often seek community sponsors to help defray expenses. There is also a BOOKS and BEYOND video training tape available for $20.00.

If a training session is organized, travel, per diem, and consultant fee costs would be involved, as well as the substitute or stipend costs for the participants in the training. Since students check out books from the school or public library, no additional books costs are involved.

How should BOOKS AND BEYOND be organized?
Choosing the Theme. There are six BOOKS AND BEYOND manuals, each introducing a new theme, which helps to keep the program fresh and lively each year. Using the graphics in the manual which capture that year's theme, bulletin boards displays are created to chart class and schoolwide reading progress. The program is introduced to the students each year by the coordinator.

Involving the family. Information packets are then sent home to parents, including an introductory letter, student record-keeping forms, and parent/sibling record-keeping forms so the whole family can be involved. Another important part of the packet is the TV viewing monitoring chart and other TV viewing skills materials. These are used to help families become more aware of how much time is spent watching TV rather than reading.

Charting progress. Students are given markers, color coordinated by grade level, which they will use to plot their progress on the bulletin board charts. Faculty members are given brightly colored markers so their students can keep a close eye on their reading progress as well. Children move their own markers when they turn in record-keeping sheets. If desired, markers can also be given to parents to encourage their participation.

Every two weeks class progress is charted on the school display. Schools can be as creative as they wish in giving schoolwide or class incentives, such as a pancake breakfast with "all the syrup you can eat" for 15,000 pages read or a pizza lunch for 30,000 pages.

Reading levels. Each program has eight levels of reading. The basis for moving from level to level can be the amount of time spent reading or the number of pages read. Younger children can participate by being read to, older students by reading themselves.

Awards. Awards are given for success in reaching each of the eight levels, and of course, a Gold Medal for completing all of them. The incentives can be small awards, such as bookmarks, or paper awards which are included in the training manual. The awards can be handed out by each classroom teacher, or for greater impact, by the principal. A gold medal ceremony is usually held for students and their parents who have completed the highest level.

Have you tried to...?

- **Offer programs that meet the needs of parents**
    1. Parents are more receptive to ideas that directly affect their children.
    2. Distribute a schoolwide parent needs assessment. Prioritize parent needs. Provide needs assessment in different languages.

- **Involve a cross-section of parents in planning programs**
    1. Use the needs assessment as your guide.
    2. Parents have many ideas that can help strengthen your parent involvement program.
    3. Some groups need help in a certain area. Personalize your workshops and activities.
    4. Parents are a valuable resource; they know the community.

- **Publicize meetings in a variety of ways**
    1. Parent newsletter, home bulletins, school marquee, posters, community agencies, church.
    2. Send a personal invitation from the school through the U.S. mail.
    3. Use the ASB leaders, clubs, organizations to help publicize.
    4. Host a continental breakfast or luncheon - This always gets parents involved.
    5. Set up a table with coffee for parents the first weeks of school and at open house to invite parents to participate in school activities. Have some literature available regarding what the school has to offer and how they can get involved.
    6. Work with your feeder schools to help parents become familiar of the changes and the programs their children will experience in junior. high and high school.

- **Provide adequate advance notice**
    1. Start planning immediately. Make a time line of everything that is needed beforehand and assign different jobs so that you don't have to do everything. Send your bulletins ahead of time and on the best days of the week. Never send an important notice on a minimum day.

- **Send timely follow-up reminders**
    1. Pass out reminders in the morning when parents drop children off at school.
    2. Include a reminder in a home bulletin.
    3. Stress the value of family participation and especially target your audience.

- **Get teachers and students involved and provide incentives.**
    1. Give prizes to the classroom that has the most parents attending. Kids like popcorn and stickers. Older students like coupons for free items at the student store or cafeteria or a coupon for food at a nearby fast food place.
    2. For a series of workshops, you may want to provide a bus for a field trip at a culminating activity for families (obviously this will require more resources and planning).

- **Target a particular group of families. Provide an interpreter.**
    1. Decide who your audience should be—all families, a grade level, a language group.
    2. Have speakers available in the different languages whenever possible.
    3. Provide an interpreter to encourage discussion with parents.

- **Have handouts available in different languages.**
  1. This takes a lot of planning but is worth the effort. Parents really appreciate it.
  2. Make sure there are no errors in the translations.

- **Schedule meetings at times most convenient to parents.**
  1. Working parents need meetings held in the evenings or on a Saturday morning.
  2. Preschool and kindergarten parents bring their children to school and pick them up everyday. Schedule meeting at those convenient times.

- **Set up a telephone tree. Parent volunteers can call parents.**
  1. Initial contact should be from a person with the same language and ethnicity.
  2. Provide a script for the person making the calls.
  3. Call parents in the evening. You'll notice the difference in attendance.

- **Provide child care and/or involve children in the program.**
  1. Plan family workshops where parents and children learn together.
  2. If a separate meeting is planned with the parents, incorporate children into at least one part of the program—parents are more likely to attend if their children are involved.
  3. Plan activities for child care. Include books, color books, crayon, bingo, etc. Don't forget prizes or certificates. Videos are a hit. Reserve the T.V. and VCR and know how to use them. How about some snacks? Keep your audience happy.

- **Provide transportation if needed.**
  1. Organize a parent carpool.
  2. If funds available provide a school bus.
  3. Hold meetings at different locations in the community (e.g., church, rec. centers, or an apartment complex community room.)

- **Have a door prize at the end of every meeting.**
  1. Solicit prizes from staff, PTA, community businesses and partners.
  2. Have a fundraiser to purchase prizes.
  3. Give away books, stickers, bookmarks or other family learning materials as prizes.

- **Provide refreshments.**
  1. Coffee and cookies are always a hit.
  2. Have special goodies such as a continental breakfast, a free luncheon or a potluck. You provide the paper goods.

- **Evaluate meetings. Make improvements a priority.**
  1. Evaluations are very important. There's always room for improvement.
  2. Publicize your efforts to the staff and to parents. Promote your good work.
  3. Invite the administrators to your activities so they can have a first hand look at what's happening.
  4. Keep a portfolio or notebook of the activities you are having. Take pictures.
  5. Publish a parent newsletter.

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Homework and Home Learning Resources for Teachers and Families

The California State PTA (1990) ***Parents Empowering Parents.*** **Los Angeles: Education Assessment Publishing Company.**

This publication, written from the parents' viewpoint and available in both English and Spanish, will be valuable to both parents and educators. Sections on homework and on reading, writing, and math are particularly useful. A list of "Homework Tips for Parents" might be sent home with students or published in the school newsletter. There are samples of daily schedules, lists of supplies, homework contracts, and assignment calendars. Specific suggestions are given for helping the child at home with reading and writing. In the math section, the skills usually taught in grades 1-3 are listed. Specific suggestions are given for what schools can do to help parents teach their children math.

Canter, L (1989) ***Homework Without Tears.*** **Santa Monica, CA: Lee Canter Associates.**

Every teacher should have a copy of this book in their classroom library to use in planning, organizing, and assigning homework, and to share with parents who are having trouble getting their child to concentrate and complete homework assignments. The book addresses such topics as establishing a homework policy, developing a schoolwide homework plan, teaching students how to do homework, and how to motivate students. Ten common homework problems are discussed with suggestions of what teachers and parents can do together to solve them.

Chrispeels, J., Boruta, M., and Daugherty, M. (1989) ***Communicating With Parents.*** **San Diego: CA, San Diego County Office of Education.**

This resource manual for teachers and administrators contains over three hundred exhibits of the ways that schools can increase the effectiveness of their communications with parents. The first half of the book focuses on school level communications, addressing such topics as newsletters, handbooks, parent surveys, parent-teacher conferencing, workshops and meeting, and volunteers, where as the second half of the book provides examples of classroom communications such as welcoming letters, progress reports, class newsletters, telephone conferencing, homework and home learning activities, and conducting home visits.

Clark, R. M. (1991). ***Home Involvement Activities.*** **Boston: Houghton Mifflin.**

This series of small booklets, published by Houghton Mifflin is intended to be a companion to their elementary mathematics textbooks. Each grade level book contains home learning activities that parents can do with their children to reinforce math skills being taught in the classroom. Each section of the booklet corresponds to a chapter in the math text. The activities use everyday household items, are straightforward, and do not take a great deal of time. They are particularly helpful in giving students an opportunity to apply the math skills they are learning to real life situations in their home using newspapers, magazines, TV, measuring tools, maps, groceries, etc.

Cutright, M. J. (1989). ***The National PTA Talks to Parents: How to Get the Best Education for Your Child.*** **New York, NY: Doubleday.**

This book should be in every school library in the parents' corner. Each chapter of the book helps parents to see the important role they play in their child's success in school. There are tips for getting children ready for school, especially on how to stimulate their learning at home, how to help your child once they have started to school, and how to help children spend their out of school hours wisely. There are also chapters on understanding the school, knowing how to chart your child's progress, and how to make your voice heard.

Everett, B. A., Holmes, C. G. and Thraen, S. R. (1991) ***Helping Your Child at Home . . . with Science; . . . with Math.*** **New York, NY: Macmillan/McGraw-Hill School Publishing.**

This series of booklets is designed to accompany the Macmillan/McGraw-Hill texts in math and science. Written especially for parents, the booklets include activities that only take about 10 minutes, with east-to follow, step-by-step directions. Parents do not need any special knowledge of the subject matter, and only common household articles are used.

Frender, Gloria. (1990). ***Learning to Learn: Strengthening Study Skills and Brain Power.*** **Nashville, TN: Incentive Publications.**

This book is most appropriate for the upper elementary student. It discusses a variety of study skills, including learning styles, time management and organizational skills, note-taking skills, reading skills, memory development techniques, test-taking skills. While the book is aimed at students, by becoming familiar with the content, parents will be able to assist their child develop good study habits. The last chapter gives specific tips on how parents can help and how to conference with teachers.

Goldsmith, E. and Handel, R. D. (1990). ***Family Reading.*** **Syracuse, NY: New Reader's Press**

Through the *Family Reading* program, adults learn to read to children while developing their own literacy skills. This program addresses the growing awareness that literacy proficiencies of children are tied to those of the adults in their family. *Family Reading* contain 10 instructional units, each built around a specific reading strategy and a literary genre. Each unit focuses on a children's book and an adult reading selection. A comprehensive teacher's guide as well as student materials such as photocopy masters, adult reading selections, and writing exercises are included.

Home and School Institute. (1984) ***In Any Language: Parents are Teachers.*** **Washington, D.C.: The Home School-Institute.**

This publication of 20 bilingual home learning activities is designed to help parents and children practice English and learn useful skills together. The program is especially designed for elementary school limited English proficient students and their parents. The activities do not cost any money, take little time, and use everyday objects. The book is published in both English and Spanish.

Pell, E. and Weiser-Ramirez, E. (1989). *Making the Most of Your Child's Education.* Washington, D.C.: ASPIRA Institute for Policy Research.

This small monograph, available in both English and Spanish, discusses the importance of parents being involved in their child's education. Some of the topics covered are how to talk with your child, how to help your child study, discipline, and parental rights to be involved.

Rich, Dorothy. (1988). *Megaskills.* Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company.

The author identifies ten skills as important to success in school and life which children need to learn: confidence, motivation, effort, responsibility, initiative, perseverance, caring, teamwork, common sense, and problem solving. Through the strategies presented in this book parents (and teachers) can help children learn these skills. The "home learning recipes" are designed to reinforce, not duplicate schoolwork, be easy to do, fun, take little time, cost little, and are presented step-by-step. The book also contains sections on reinforcing reading, writing and math at home, creativity, networking with other parents, and working with the school.

Rich, Dorothy. (1983). *Survival Guide for Busy Parents: How to Help Your Child Do Well at School While You Do Well at Work*: Washington, D.C.: The Home School Institute.

This book is designed for parents in the work force. It contains practical tips on how to organize parent and child daily activities to accomplish necessary tasks, and, at the same time, help children reinforce basic skills. Suggestions are given for things that can be done while eating a meal, making beds, even brushing teeth. The book includes sections on developing responsible children, positive use of television, single, working parents, discipline and self-esteem.

Stenmark, J. K., Thompson, V. and Cossey, R. (1986). *Family Math.* Berkeley, CA: Lawrence Hall of Science, University of California.

The Family Math program focuses on parents and children learning mathematics together. The book which accompanies six to eight lessons, one to two hours long, gives parents and children an opportunity to develop problem-solving skills and to build an understanding of mathematics with "hands-on" materials. The book can be used, however, by a parent without attending a class.. Topics in *Family Math* are in the general categories of arithmetic, geometry, probability and statistics, measurement, estimation, calculators, computers, logical thinking and math requirements for various careers. The book is also available in Spanish, *Matématica para la Familia.*

NEXT STEPS PLANNING SHEET

Based on what has been learned, the strengths of our school's current homework guidelines, practices and programs are:

Our school currently provides the following workshops and learning opportunities for parents in regard to homework and home learning.

Families are currently involved in home learning activities in the following ways:

NEXT STEPS PLANNING SHEET (continued)

Based on what has been learned, the next steps to take to strengthen homework and home learning activities are:

Step / Activity	Timeline	Resources Needed

Who else needs to be involved for these steps to be effective?

What problems might be encounter in taking these next steps?

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Building School-Family Partnerships for Learning: Workshops for Urban Educators

School Programs and Practices

Workshop Leader's Guide

Developed for
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
U.S. Department of Education
by Janet Chrispeels

OVERVIEW

KEY CONCEPT

Schoolwide (applied throughout the school) guidelines, programs, and practices are essential and necessary to the development of effective school-family partnerships that foster family involvement both at school and in school-related learning activities with children at home.

RATIONALE AND PURPOSE

Research on effective schools shows the importance of schoolwide goals, programs, and practices in bringing about changes in the school's organization, curriculum and instructional practices, and culture in ways that increase student achievement. The same schoolwide focus is also essential in building an effective school-family partnership and in implementing successful home learning activities and programs. When schoolwide practices, which have been cooperatively developed by parents, teachers, and other school staff are initiated, everyone at the school benefits (Epstein and Becker, 1982, Epstein, 1987, Henderson, 1981, 1987; Tangri and Moles, 1987).

The research conducted at The Johns Hopkins University by Epstein and Becker (1982) showed that individual teachers can positively impact student learning and behavior when they communicate regularly with parents, invite them to assist with children's learning at home, and involve them as volunteers in classroom activities at school. However, these good practices tend to benefit only the children in that teacher's classroom. To ensure the benefit for all children, schoolwide guidelines and practices need to be established. Teachers who are not comfortable working with parents need skills and support. It is well documented that most administrators and teachers have had few opportunities to develop skills in working with parents during either pre-service or inservice training (Chavkin and Williams, 1985).

The purpose of this workshop is to assist administrators, teachers, other school staff, and parent leaders to work effectively with families in identifying and developing schoolwide guidelines, programs, and practices which build effective school-family partnerships and which promote and support the participation of families in student learning activities at home.

LEARNER OBJECTIVES

By the end of this workshop, participants will be able to:

1. Understand the importance and necessity of schoolwide programs and practices in the development of strong school-family partnerships.

2. Identify schoolwide factors that promote or hinder school-family partnerships, especially parent involvement in student learning at home.

3. Be able to identify five types of school-family partnership roles and understand how they relate to the effective schools framework.

4. Understand how to apply the five school-family partnership roles and effective schools framework to two case studies.

5. Know several *next steps* to take to strengthen each participant's school-family partnership program.

ACTIVITIES	**TIME ESTIMATE**
#1 Introduction and Warm-up	10 min
#2 Identify the Need for School-level Actions to Build Strong Partnerships with Families	15 min
#3 Identify Schoolwide Factors that Promote or Hinder the Development of School-Family Partnerships and Family Participation	20 min
#4 Understand Five Types of School-Family Partnership Roles	10 min
#5 Use the Partnership Roles Framework to Analyze Two Case Studies	25 min
#6 Planning the "Next Steps"	30 min
#7 Summary and Closing	5 min
Total	120 min

Transparency masters and copies of participant handouts can be located in the sections following this guide.

PREPARATION FOR THE WORKSHOP

Please follow the instructions for preparing all workshops found in the beginning of this volume. This includes information on all equipment and materials needed to conduct the workshops. In addition, the following special arrangements should be noted.

This workshop focuses on school level actions that foster school-family partnerships and that will lay the ground work for parents to be involved with their children in learning activities at home. As the case studies so ably demonstrate, a comprehensive approach to parent involvement and partnership building is likely to have the greatest impact on student learning (Gordon, 1978). The workshop leader will want to stress throughout the workshop the need for each school to develop a positive, warm, and welcoming environment for parents and effective communication strategies as the foundation for involving families effectively in home-learning activities. In other words, parents will best be able to assist their children's learning at home when:

- parents are made to feel welcome and comfortable at school
- there is an extensive and regular means of two-way communication between home and school, especially about homework, expectations, the curriculum, student progress, and how parents can help;
- there are workshops for parents to learn how to help;
- there is a place where parents can meet and call their own;
- parents are given many opportunities at school to show their support for their children;
- when teachers are provided with opportunities to learn about students' families, how to communicate with them, and how to involve them in meaningful activities;
- parents have a meaningful role in shaping the parent involvement program and assisting in other school decisions.

A word of caution: Building a strong school-family partnership program that maximizes the potential for parents to support their children's learning both at home and at school requires a long-term concerted commitment by the school staff as well as an ongoing effort as new children and parents each year enter the school system. This workshop, even when combined with the others in the series, will raise awareness and suggest some possibilities for action. To bring about significant change will require administrators, teachers, support staff, and parents to engage in ongoing active study, planning, implementation and evaluation at the school site.

Activity #1: Introduction

Objectives:
1. To help participants become acquainted with each other
2. To review the key concept, purpose, and learner objectives of the workshop

Recommended Time: 15 minutes

Directions and Procedures:

1. Introduce yourself and present the key concept which will serve as the focus of the workshop. ***Use T-1*** and refer participants to ***Handout #1***.

2. Ask participants to think for a moment about a word or phrase that they feel symbolizes parent involvement or school-family partnerships in their school. Ask them to also consider the reason they made their choice. (E.g., Our relationship with families is like the wind -- we are always blowing hot or cold. Or, our relationship is like fire - warm and comforting.) After time to contemplate, ask for volunteers from the group to share their ideas. Write responses on a flip chart. After participants have had an opportunity to share their ideas point out that perceptions about the nature of school-family partnerships vary. Usually symbols are chosen for positive or negative reasons. Acknowledge this reality by sharing that building good relationships with families is not easy and there will be both positive and negative aspects of each school's relationship with parents.

3. State that the purpose of this workshop is to assist administrators, teachers, other school staff, and parent leaders to work together effectively to develop school level guidelines, programs and practices which lead to strong school-family partnership with **all** families, and which enable families to better support student learning at home. ***Use T-2.***

4. Point out that throughout this workshop the term *school-family partnership* will be used. In the context of this workshop, *school-family partnership* is defined as the mutual collaboration, support, and participation of families and school staff at home or at the school site in activities and efforts that directly and positively affect the success of children's learning and progress in school. ***Use T-3.***

6. Review learner objectives. ***Use T-4***. Ask participants if there are other areas of major concern for them. If some are raised, note them on chart pad and indicate which ones will be addressed in activities of this workshop and which will need to be explored at another time.

7. Review agenda which has been posted. (***Note:*** *Use the outline of activities given above to develop the agenda, however, it is best not to include time references on the agenda posted for participants*).

Activity #2: Identify the need for school level actions to build a strong partnership with families

Objective: To gain an understanding of the importance of school level practices which support teachers and other school staff to work effectively with parents.

Recommended Time: 15 minutes

Directions and Procedures:

Point out that for the next few minutes you want to discuss why it is important to develop schoolwide programs and practices which will support teachers and other school staff to work effectively with parents. While it is teachers who have the most direct contact with parents, the schoolwide context can either support or hinder individual teacher partnership efforts.

a. **Culture of schools.** Schools develop pervasive cultures. Embodied in the culture are shared beliefs and attitudes about the families of the children who attend the school. These beliefs shape the school's patterns of interaction with families. The patterns of interaction may create an open, positive, and welcoming environment and culture, or a closed and defensive one where parents know they are not really welcome. The pattern may even vary within the school for different groups of parents, especially if students come from diverse ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. The selection of a symbol to represent your school's relationship with families, while on one level was superficial, on another level may well reflect deeply held beliefs and values that are affecting relationships among parents, teachers, support staff, and administrators, and preventing the development of a strong, mutually-supportive school-family partnership . (*Use examples shared in the warm-up activity to illustrate.*)

   If schools want families to be more actively engaged with their children's learning both at school and at home, one of the first tasks will be to examine the school's culture to make sure parents are truly welcome. This will include examining the attitudes and actions of custodians and gardeners, secretaries, classroom assistants, cafeteria workers, and bus drivers as well as of administrators and teachers, counselors, librarians and nurses.

b. **Change through a schoolwide approach.** Some urban schools have established positive relationships with parents, and as a result, student achievement improves (Henderson, 1988 and 1983). The changing of relationships from negative to positive is usually the result of schoolwide efforts and actions. In other words, the school culture is changed.

   Caution: Schools may already be undertaking other reform and change initiatives. You may wish to raise the awareness of participants to consider connecting improvements in school-family partnerships to their broader school reform efforts.

c. **Individual teacher efforts important, but not sufficient.** The work of Epstein and Becker (1982; and Epstein, 1987; Tangri and Moles, 1987) showed that some individual teachers made extra efforts to reach out to families, inviting them to be partners in their children's education. These teachers shared information with parents, gave them tips on how to help their children, especially with language arts and reading activities, and involved a few parents as volunteers in the classroom. As a result, students in these teachers' classrooms registered higher achievement gains in reading, teachers felt better supported by parents, and parents felt better informed and more positive toward the teachers.

However, these teachers often operated in isolation, unsupported by schoolwide programs, thus minimizing the potential schoolwide impact of their efforts.

(If participants have not attended previous workshops in this series and if time permits, you may wish to point out that the benefits enjoyed by each of the partners: teachers, administrators, students, and parents either by alerting them to the Overview Handout or by using Ts 5-8 Benefits of School-Family Partnership Program to summarize findings).

d. **The power of a coordinated approach.** Effective schools research has shown the power of a coordinated approach. Teachers are best supported when schoolwide characteristics of effectiveness are addressed. Similarly, individual school efforts are greatly enhanced when carried out within the context of district improvement efforts. This is why one of the workshops in this series addresses school district policies and practices in regard to parent involvement.

Teddlie, Kirby, and Stringfield (1989) found that schools that had higher levels of student achievement and displayed high levels of schoolwide effectiveness characteristics, also had stronger classroom instructional programs. In other words, good teaching practices are strengthened when the whole school is effective. Rosenholtz (1989) found that the school learning climate and discipline are set at the schoolwide level and reinforced at the classroom level, not *vice versa*.

A similar case for schoolwide actions can be made in regard to strengthening school-family relations in general, and in increasing family involvement in home learning activities, in particular. If district policies and support are provided, this will assist each school in the district to implement school-family partnership initiatives. In turn schoolwide guidelines, programs, and practices will enable individual teacher efforts to have maximum effect. The remainder of this workshop will explore the schoolwide elements necessary to develop a comprehensive approach to parent involvement.

e. **In developing schoolwide guidelines, programs, and practices, one last word is necessary.** It is absolutely essential to involve parents in the developmental process. If families are to become true partners with schools, the place to begin is with their active participation in developing the programs that are meant to serve their needs. The activities and information presented in this workshop will allow you to share what you are doing already to work with families as well as learn what other schools are doing. The last section of this workshop will address some of the next steps to take in reaching out to parents.

Activity #3: Identify schoolwide factors that promote and hinder the development of school-family partnerships and family participation

Objectives: To identify school factors which promote or hinder family participation and support of student learning both at school and at home

Recommended Time: 25 minutes

Directions and Procedures:

1. Point out that in this next activity the group will explore the **school factors** that promote and those that hinder family participation both at home and at school. Reinforce the purpose of the activity, by stating that you realize that many families in urban schools face harsh personal and community environments which negatively impact parent involvement in student learning both at school and at home. However, for purposes of this activity, you want participants to focus on school factors that promote or hinder school-family partnerships.

2. Divide participants into groups of five to six participants. Ask half of the groups to brainstorm a list of schoolwide factors or actions that promote school-family partnerships, especially family participation in home learning activities with their children. Ask the other half of the groups to brainstorm schoolwide factors that hinder such participation.

   To quickly clarify the task, give each group a 4 x 6 task card with one of the following sets of directions and information.

Group Task Card

School Factors which Promote School-Family Partnerships, Especially Family Participation in Student Learning from Home and at School.

Select a group facilitator and recorder. Record your ideas on the chart paper provided. Your group is to identify school factors which promote school-family partnerships. Draw on your own experiences at your schools. Some examples might be:

- assistants in the office who speak language of the parents;
- parent workshops on how to help with homework;
- after school homework center staffed by community volunteers and high school students;
- home reading program for kindergarten students.

Your group will have 8-10 minutes for discussion. When the time is up, join a group which has brainstormed hindering factors. As the hindering group shares their factors, discuss how some of the promoting factors identified by your group could help over come the barriers. You will have 10-12 minutes for discussion.

Group Task Card

School Factors which Hinder School-Family Partnerships, Especially Family Participation in Student Learning at Home and at School

Select a group facilitator and recorder. Record your ideas on the chart paper provided. Your group is to identify school factors which hinder school-family partnerships. Draw on your own experiences at your schools. Some examples might be:

- no one in the front office who speaks the major languages spoken by our parents;
- no information provided to parents on how to help their children with schoolwork;
- school newsletter not translated into major languages spoken by parents;
- no materials available or time provided for teachers to develop home learning materials;
- homework guidelines in place, but they are not systematically followed by teachers.

Your group will have 8-10 minutes for discussion. When the time is up, join a group which has brainstormed promoting factors. Share your group's hindering factors first. Then ask the other group to share factors they discussed which could help overcome the barriers. As a combined group discuss any other ideas you have for overcoming barriers. You will have 10-12 minutes for discussion.

Prepare sufficient numbers of each type of task card, based on the total number of participants (that is, one task card is needed for each group that you plan to have). Provide each team with chart paper and marking pen. Tell participants they will have ***8-10 minutes for the initial brainstorming and 10-12 minutes for their combined sharing***.

3. Close the activity by posting promoting and hindering charts and asking each combined group to share **one** schoolwide action they think would be most helpful in promoting school-family partnerships and strengthening parent support of student learning. Keep charts and refer to them in Activity #4.

Activity #4: Understand Five Types of School-Family Partnership Roles

Objective: To present five types of partnership roles

Recommended Time: 10 minutes

Directions and Procedures:

Refer participants to ***Handout #2*** in the Participant Workbook ***and Use T-9***. Explain that this sheet presents five school-family partnership roles. These roles have been identified as key elements of a comprehensive partnership program that supports student learning. (Chrispeels, 1987; Epstein, 1987; Henderson, Marburger, Ooms, 1986; Keesling, 1980; Lyons, Robbins, and Smith, 1982). Both home and school share in the roles and responsibilities, but schools must provide the climate, support, and initiative for building the partnership.

a. Using ***Handout #2 (and Use T-9, School-Family Partnership Continuum)*** briefly explain the five roles. Stress that communication is the foundation for all other partnership roles. If the school focuses on strengthening two-way school-family communications, many of the other roles become much easier to implement. Efforts must continually be made to reach all families. Point out that the roles are arranged in pyramid fashion in this transparency, because the roles build one upon another and overlap one with another. For example, if communication is well developed, families will be provided with many opportunities to learn about the school and will know how they can support and assist their child in learning activities at home. To some extent, each role requires more active participation, commitment and skill; therefore, each role is likely to involve fewer families. This fact does not diminish the school's responsibility to reach out to all families, nor should non-participation be interpreted as apathy and lack of interest or support.

   Point out that research has shown that enhancing communications, and increasing the opportunities for learning and teaching are the roles that will have the greatest impact on student learning. Traditionally, however, most efforts to involve parents have centered around support roles, especially fund-raising, open house, and social events. Support events are important, but should be examined in terms of how they support and facilitate the other roles.

   Stress that far fewer families will be involved at the decision-making and advocacy level. This is true of all organizations be it a teachers union or administrators association. Too often school staff spend too much time worrying about how few parents are involved at this level, when the focus of attention needs to be on school-family communication, opportunities for parents to support their children and the school, and opportunities for parents to be learners and teachers.

(Note: The choice of language used in discussing a concept such as school-family partnerships can do much to facilitate or encourage change. The labels used to describe the various roles within continuum (e.g., Co-communicators) were selected to encourage and model a partnership approach.)

b. Allow 2-3 minutes for participants to review ***Handout #2*** and ask if there are any questions about the roles and definitions.

c. **Note:** If time permits, you may wish to use ***Handout #3*** with participants who are using an effective schools framework for school reform. Spend a few minutes discussing which of the activities represent the various school-family partnership roles—co-communicator, supporter, learner, teacher, and advocacy and decision-making. Not all roles are represented by the activities listed, but for all of the effective schools categories, most of the roles are represented.

   Ask participants why it is valuable to examine school-family partnership activities from these two frames of reference—school-family partnership roles and effective schools? (For example, some activities become obvious from an effective schools framework, whereas other possible activities come to light when thinking in terms of the roles. When combined, the school is more likely to develop a comprehensive approach to parent involvement which will be most likely to enhance student achievement.) ***Allow 5-6 minutes for review and discussion.***

Activity #5: Analyze two case studies of comprehensive school-family partnership programs that support student learning

Objective: To understand how the partnership roles can be used to analyze and plan exemplary school-family partnership programs.

Recommended Time: 25 minutes

Directions and Procedures:

1. Explain that now participants have gained an understanding of the five partnership roles, they are going to read two case studies of comprehensive school-family partnership programs. The extensive partnership activities undertaken by these schools have been organized in relation to the five partnership roles.

2. Divide participants into groups of five.

   a. Refer participants to ***Handout #4,*** which summarizes the two case studies, ***and Handout #5, Case Study Reading and Discussion Guide***.

   b. Ask each group to number off one through five. Each participant will read the background for the case study schools and one of the roles describing the activities undertaken by the two schools (that is, number one reads the background plus the description about home and school as co-communicators for St. John the Baptist School and Willard Model School, number two read the background and the section on home and school as co-supporters for both school, and so forth) Each participant should then complete the relevant section of ***Handout #5, Case Study Reading and Discussion Guide***.

   c. **Allow 10 minutes** for each participant to review their assigned section and record their reactions and responses to the questions on ***Handout #5.***

   d. Tell participants that after the case study has been read, each group member should share their reactions to the case studies with the others. Ask one member of each group to record new ideas and suggestions for activities from participants' schools which were listed in response to the second part of each person's question on ***Handout #5.*** Encourage participants to think of which of these activities are also linked to their wider school reform efforts. Provide chart paper or a blank transparency. ***Allow 10 minutes for discussion***.

3. Close the activity by asking each group to share additional activities their group identified. Explain to participants that they can use the format in which the case studies were presented to organize and describe their own school's school-family partnership program. It is an easy way to take stock and to see which of the roles are strongest. In addition, ***Handout #3*** can be used as a checklist to review current practices and as an organizing format for assessing school-family partnership activities.

Activity #6: Take the Next Steps: Develop a Plan of Action

Objectives: To identify several next steps to take once participants have returned to their schools.

Recommended Time: 15 minutes

Directions and Procedures:

Note: If school teams of administrator, teachers, and parents are attending this workshop, regroup participants into school teams so that the school can begin planning to meet its own needs. If participants are from different schools, they can remain in the same groups as assigned in the previous activity, in which case, the planning activity will involve more sharing of ideas rather than developing a specific plan of action. If only one or two people are attending from a school, point out that they will want to record their ideas on the **Next Steps Planning Sheet**, but will need to return to their school and organize a planning team to be able to proceed further with implementation.

1. Reinforce the key concepts of this workshop by briefly summarizing the purpose and learners objectives. Be sure to emphasize the importance of schoolwide goals, programs and practices in bringing about change in the school's culture.

2. Point out that to implement ideas learned in this workshop will require planning as well as possibly learning new skills. Both parents and school staff are likely to need support and additional information.

   Briefly present the following points about how the school might go about developing an action plan to strengthen their school-family partnership program.

   a. Review the material learned at this workshop as well as school data about the school's current parent involvement and partnership program. Share the information at a faculty meeting and solicit input from the staff about preliminary next steps. Invite staff members to join and participate in a planning task group.

   b. Form a school-family partnership task group of parents, teachers, principal, community members, if one does not already exist. For example, a number of schools are involved in restructuring efforts. As a result, the school may already have a restructuring committee. Participants to this workshop can request that a task group work on strengthening school- family partnership activities be established as a subcommittee of the restructuring committee. The subcommittee or task group needs to be composed of key parent leaders, representative of the school community, teachers, classified personnel such as a custodian or secretary, and an administrator, if possible.

   c. Use data about current practices, decide which areas need to be strengthened.

d. Use parent and teacher surveys to identify priorities and training/informational needs (for example, use surveys in the Families Workshop Leader's Guide). To identify parent training needs, provide a list of possible workshop topics to parents for them to choose which ones are most needed and wanted. Survey the staff to determine areas in which the staff wants more assistance. Within this workshop series there are three additional ones designed to meet school staff needs: ***Families as Learning Environments, Communication Strategies, and Homework and Home Learning Activities.*** Other staff development workshops may be desired such as one on designing quality homework or parent-teacher conferencing.

e. Develop an action plan. The plan should fit with other school priorities. For example, if the school is focusing on implementing a literature-based reading program, the parent involvement learning activities should also address this theme. If hands-on science is the year's focus, again, develop a variety of programs and approaches that will help parents reinforce this in-school curriculum in the home.

f. Discuss the action plan with the entire faculty to gain support and greater participation in implementation.

g. Celebrate small gains and changes in school-family relations.

h. Evaluate the impact of efforts on parents, student and teachers.

i. Set new goals each year and recognize that building a comprehensive school-family partnership program will take three to five years.

3. Refer participants to ***Handout #6 (Use T-10 and 11)*** and ask them individually to complete the worksheet. Point out that if even the school has a team at the workshop, it is important to have time for individual reflection before discussing and developing a team plan.

   a. State that what each person has just recorded on ***Handout #6*** will serve as a basis for beginning planning when they return to their school.

   Close the activity by asking each participant or group to share one next step they will take after the workshop. Remind participants that planning needs to be an ongoing process and that this is just the beginning. To really bring about change at their school, will require more work once they return to their site. Hopefully, this activity has given them a sense of where to begin.

Activity #7: Summary and Conclusion

Objective: The purpose of this activity is to help participants think about what has been learned in the workshop.

Recommended Time: 5 minutes

Directions and Procedures:

Conclude the entire workshop series of this individual workshop by reviewing the following key points:

Even though families are children's first and important teachers, schools also have strong impacts on children. In particular, schools influence children's knowledge, their self-concept and confidence as a learner, and their willingness to continue in school through grade 12.

In addition to the strong influence teachers have on children during the school hours, schools can also influence the learning environment in the home. Through activities in this workshop, participants have explored some of the ways schools can be more proactive in shaping and influencing the home learning environments of their students.

Close by reminding participants of the benefits presented at the beginning of the workshop (which are listed at the beginning of the Participant Workbook) that each will enjoy when home and school work as partners. Building a strong school-family partnership will require extra efforts, but the payoff for students are high.

Thank participants for their active involvement.

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SCHOOL PROGRAMS AND PRACTICES

Transparencies

T-1	Key Concept
T-2	Workshop Purpose
T-3	Definition of School-Family Partnerships
T-4	Learner Objectives
T-5	Benefits for Teachers
T-6	Benefits for Administrators
T-7	Benefits for Parents
T-8	Benefits for Students
T-9	School-Family Partnership Roles Continuum
T-10/11	Next Steps Planning Sheets

KEY CONCEPT

Schoolwide guidelines, programs, and practices are essential for the development of effective school-family partnerships that foster family involvement both at school and in school-related learning activities with children at home.

PURPOSE

To assist school staff and parent leaders in working effectively together to develop schoolwide guidelines, programs, and practices which:

- lead to a strong school-family partnership with all families, and
- promote family participation in student learning activities at school and at home.

SCHOOL-FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS

are the mutual collaboration, support, and participation of parents and school staff at home or at the school site in activities and efforts that directly and positively affect the educational progress of children.

LEARNER OBJECTIVES

By the end of this workshop, participants will be able to:

- **Understand the importance of schoolwide programs and practices in developing strong school-family partnerships.**
- **Identify schoolwide factors that promote or hinder school-family partnerships.**
- **Be able to identify five types of school-family partnership roles.**
- **Understand how to apply the partnership roles and effective schools framework to two case studies.**
- **Identify several next steps to take to strengthen school-family partnerships.**

BENEFITS OF SCHOOL-FAMILY PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMS

Teachers benefit through:

- School staff development and discussion about working with families from diverse backgrounds.
- Support from the principal for their efforts to work with families.
- Tapping the knowledge, skills, and resources of colleagues.
- Maximizing limited resources and time through the cooperative development of homework and home learning activities.
- Attaining a higher rate of return on homework and greater involvement of families in home learning activities.
- Increased parental support and cooperation.

BENEFITS OF SCHOOL-FAMILY PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMS

Administrators benefit through:

- Better communications between school and home.
- Fewer parent complaints about inconsistent and inappropriate homework.
- Better use of limited resources to address the critical need of linking home and school.
- Improved school climate where children see parents and teachers as partners.

BENEFITS OF SCHOOL-FAMILY PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMS

Parents benefit through:

- Opportunities to become partners with teachers and to shape important decisions that enhance their children's chances for success in school.
- Consistent expectations, practices, and messages about homework and home learning activities.
- Increased opportunities to engage in home learning activities with their children.
- Access to schoolwide resources such as parent learning centers, homework hotlines, homework centers, parent workshops, and home visits.

BENEFITS OF SCHOOL-FAMILY PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMS

Students benefit through:

- More positive attitudes toward school.
- Higher achievement in reading.
- Higher quality and more grade appropriate homework.
- Completion of more homework on weekends.
- Greater sense of familiarity between home and school.

Epstein (1991)

SCHOOL-FAMILY PARTNERSHIP

<-------- ROLES CONTINUUM ------->

Home & School as Co-Advisors, Advocates, Decision-Makers

As Co-Teachers

As Co-Learners

As Co-Supporters

As Co-Communicators

NEXT STEPS PLANNING SHEET

Based on what has been learned, the strengths of our school's current school-family partnership program are:

Our school currently needs to strengthen its partnership program in the following areas:

Families are currently involved in home learning/teaching activities in the following ways:

NEXT STEPS PLANNING SHEET (continued)

Based on what has been learned, the next steps to take to strengthen our school-family partnership program are:

Step/Activity	Timeline	Resources Needed

Who else needs to be involved for these steps to be effective?

What problems might be encountered in taking these next steps?

Building School-Family Partnerships for Learning:
Workshops for Urban Educators

School Programs and Practices

Participant Handouts

1. Overview: Key Concepts, Rationale and Purpose, Learner's Objectives
2. School-Family Partnerships
3. Using the Effective Schools Framework to Plan School-Family Partnerships
4. Two Case Studies of School-Family Partnerships
5. Case Study Readings and Discussion Guide
6. Next Steps Planning Sheets

School Programs and Practices

OVERVIEW

KEY CONCEPT

Schoolwide guidelines, programs, and practices are essential and necessary to the development of effective school-family partnerships that foster family involvement both at school and in school-related learning activities with children at home.

RATIONALE AND PURPOSE

Research on effective schools shows the importance of schoolwide goals, programs, and practices in bringing about changes in the school's organization, curriculum and instructional practices, and culture in ways that increase student achievement. The same schoolwide focus is also essential in building an effective home-school partnership and in implementing successful home learning activities and programs. When schoolwide practices, which have been cooperatively developed by parents, teachers, and other school staff, are initiated, everyone at the school benefits. Some of the benefits are (Epstein and Becker, 1982, Epstein, 1987, Henderson, 1981, 1987; Tangri and Moles, 1987) :

Teachers benefit through:

1. schoolwide training and discussion about how to work effectively with families from diverse backgrounds;
2. support from the principal for their efforts to work with families;
3. tapping the knowledge, skills, and resources of colleagues;
4. maximizing limited resources and time through the cooperative development of grade level homework and home learning activities;
5. a better understanding of parent expectations and closer communication with parents;
6. attaining a higher rate of return on homework and greater involvement of families in home learning activities;
7. increased parental support and cooperation.

Administrators benefit through:

1. better communications between school and home;
2. fewer parent complaints about inconsistent and inappropriate homework;
3. better use of limited resources to address the critical need of linking home and school;
4. improved school climate where children see parents and teachers as partners.

Parents benefit through:

1. opportunities to become partners with teachers and to shape important decisions that enhance their children's chances for success in school;
2. consistent expectations, practices, and messages about homework and home learning activities;

3. increased opportunities to engage in home learning activities with their children;
4. access to schoolwide resources such as, parent learning centers, homework hotlines, homework centers, parent workshops, and home visits.

Students benefit through:

1. more positive attitudes toward school;
2. higher achievement in reading;
3. higher quality and more grade appropriate homework;
4. completion of more homework on weekends;
5. observing more similarity between family and school.

Workshop Purpose:

The purpose of this workshop is to assist administrators, teachers, other school staff, and parent leaders to work effectively with families in identifying and developing schoolwide guidelines, programs, and practices which build effective school-home partnerships and which promote and support the participation of families in student learning activities at home.

LEARNER OBJECTIVES

By the end of this workshop, participants will be able to:

1. Understand the importance and necessity of schoolwide programs and practices in the development of strong school-family partnerships.

2. Identify schoolwide factors that promote or hinder school-family partnerships, especially parent involvement in student learning at home.

3. Be able to identify five types of school-family partnership roles.

4. Understand how to apply the five school-family partnership roles to two case studies

5. Know several *next steps* to take to strengthen each participant's school-family partnership program.

School-Family Partnership Roles

1 **Home and School as Co-Communicators**

Communication serves as the foundation for all other school-family partnership activities. As communicators families and schools need to exchange information that enables both to assist children's learning. This communication needs to positive and supportive and use a variety of techniques—written, face-to-face, telephone, formal and informal meetings, through videos— that increase understanding.

2. **Home and School as Co-Supporters**

Families and schools need to support the child. Families show their support by providing food, clothing, shelter, a healthy living environment, positive encouragement and attention. Schools support families by helping families link with community resources, offering support and encouragement in times of need.

Families show support for schools through traditional activities such as fund-raising, attendance at open houses, back-to-school nights, student performances, etc. Teachers support families by inviting them and encouraging them to be an active part of the classroom and school and visiting families in their home.

3. **Home and School as Co-Learners**

Both teachers, administrators, other school staff and families need opportunities to learn about each other and how to work together to support student learning. Families need information about the school curriculum, policies, procedures, other aspects of school life, as well as about how they can help their children and enhance their parenting skills. School staff needs opportunities to increase their effectiveness in communicating with parents (including conferencing skills), in designing effective homework and home learning activities, to utilize the skills and talents of parents to support classroom instruction, to learn about the goals and expectations of parents for their children and the attributes and strengths of the family and its culture.

4. **Home and School as Co-Teachers**

Both family and school serve as primary teachers of children. This partnership role includes the formal teaching of students at school and the ways in which parents support and encourage learning at home and in the community. Teachers and families need to work together to connect and provide mutual support for each other in ways that enhance student learning.

5. **Home and School as Co-Decision-makers, Advocates and Advisors**

This partnership roles includes participation together in formal organizations such as on PTA Board, on a School Site Council or School Advisory Committee and Booster Clubs. Teachers and parents can also be advocates for children in less formal, structured ways. The number of teachers and parents who will become involved at this level will be small, however, and those who are willing to fulfill this role need training, support and encouragement.

Using the Effective Schools Framework to Plan School-Family Partnership Activities

School already does	School Should try	Frequent Monitoring
		(Co-Communicator Strategies)
		Provide assignment calendars or homework journals.
		Use homework sign-off sheets or contracts.
		Send monthly progress reports.
		Make quarterly telephone calls home, especially to report progress and growth.
		Send two-way parent-teacher grams.
		Send home weekly folders of students' work.
		Hold regular parent-teacher conferences
		Establish a homework buddy system.
		Install homework hotlines for assignments.
		(Co-Learner Strategies)
		Encourage classroom visitations and observations.
		Conduct workshops on how to supervise homework, monitor student progress.
		Host more frequent back-to-school or curriculum nights.
		(Co-Teacher Strategies)
		Share an activity sheet on monitoring TV viewing.
		Provide an activity sheet on time management.
		Publish newsletter articles on how parents can keep student records and monitor progress.
		(Co-decision-maker strategies)
		Involve parents in student goal setting at parent-teacher conferences.
		Involve the school council in reviewing monitoring procedures, reporting of pupil progress, and conducting curriculum reviews.

School already does	School Should try	Opportunity to Learn and Time-on-Task
		(Co-Communicator Strategies)
		Share home learning ideas in the school newsletter.
		Share with parents, in the school newsletter, learning opportunities in the community
		Provide tips on time management for children in the newsletter.
		(Co-Supporter Strategies)
		Develop a computer home-lending program.
		Organize family field trips to cultural places and events.
		Organize an after school homework center.
		Provide extended-day child care services with enrichment activities.
		Develop a parent/community volunteer program

		Opportunity to Learn and Time-on-Task
		(Co-Learner Strategies)
		Organize family learning opportunities, such as Family Math or Family Science, etc.
		Provide parents with home learning materials.
		Sponsor home reading programs.
		(Co-Teacher Strategies)
		Encourage parents to share skills, expertise as a way of extending the class curriculum.
		Organize after school parent-led school enrichment programs for students.
		Assign meaningful, well-develop daily homework and provide guidelines on how parents are to help/support.
		Involve families in home learning acclivities.
		(Co-decision-maker strategies)
		Involve the school council and PTA in planning ways to extend learning opportunities.
		Form an alliance with other agencies and community resources to extend learning opportunities.

School already does	School Should try	Clear School Mission and Academic Focus
		(Co-Communicator Strategies)
		Provide grade or course level curriculum guides.
		Provide tips to parents on how they can help through the school newsletter, video tapes, or telephone message systems.
		Publicize academic awards, honors and test results in school and community newspapers.
		Communicate frequently to parents the school's mission through newsletters, telephone messages, school meetings.
		(Co-Supporter Strategies)
		Explore how support activities such as fundraisers, socials, carnivals, etc. can reinforce the school's academic focus (for example, a Halloween Carnival that has a literary character costume focus, or a reading or math marathon to raise funds).
		(Co-Learner Strategies)
		Tie parent or family workshops to curriculum focus, e.g., offer Family Math, Family Reading, or Family Science to emphasize school's academic focus.
		Conduct home visits to acquaint parents with the school's mission, curriculum, and suggest home learning strategies.
		Organize curriculum nights for parents every nine weeks and provide tips on how parents can help.
		(Co-Teacher Strategies)
		Identify parents' and community members' skills and expertise which link to the school's academic mission.
		(Co-decision-maker strategies)
		Involve parents and community in developing school's mission and goals.
		Form advisory committees to support each academic area.

School already does	School Should try	High Expectations
		(Co-Communicator Strategies)
		Communicate clearly and frequently academic and behavior expectations that have been developed by teachers, administrators, parents and community members.
		Hold beginning of the year parent-teacher-student conferences to set academic goals and develop learning plans to ensure student success.
		Display student academic work throughout the school and community.
		(Co-Supporter Strategies)
		Work with parents, community, business, and college and university leaders to provide motivational activities for students to raise expectations regarding future adult options.
		Organize student success teams composed of teachers, counselors, community resource people, reading specialists, parents, speech therapists, principal, to assist students who need additional help and resources to achieve success.
		Develop a comprehensive awards program that regularly recognizes achievements in all academic areas (e.g., reading, creative writing, spelling, math problem-solving and computation, science, social studies, art, music, P.E., student leadership, community service), not just "student of the month" programs.
		Organize adult education opportunities on school campus (e.g., literacy classes, English as a Second Language classes, resume writing and job search programs, etc.) which help to meet parent needs and raise expectations.
		(Co-Learner Strategies)
		Provide workshops for families on career and college opportunities which help to raise expectations.
		Organize academic performances (e.g. math fairs, readers' theatre) which allow students to demonstrate to parents what they are learning at school.
		Organize curriculum nights for parents every nine weeks and provide tips on how parents can help.
		(Co-Teacher Strategies)
		Involve parents as teachers, experts in the classroom to share their special knowledge and talents to support the curriculum.
		(Co-decision-maker strategies)
		Make how to raise expectations a topic for discussion at PTA, or school council meetings.

School already does	School Should try	Leadership
		(Co-Communicator Strategies)
		Recognize the critical leadership role parents play in regard to their children.
		Keep parents informed of leadership opportunities on school committees and in the community.
		(Co-Supporter Strategies)
		Provide multiple opportunities for parents to be involved, especially in leadership roles which support the school.
		(Co-Learner Strategies)
		Develop parent leaders by offering leadership development workshops.
		Provide training for parent leaders and teachers in collaboration and problem-solving skills and strategies.
		Provide workshops for parents on topics determined by parents to meet their learning needs.
		(Co-decision-maker strategies)
		Establish school committees which give parents and teachers and opportunity to work together on important school issues.
		Establish a parent leadership group, such as a Parents Club, PTA, or parent-teacher organization.

School already does	School Should try	Positive, Safe, Orderly Learning Environment
		(Co-Communicator Strategies)
		Establish and communicate student behavioral expectations to parents regularly.
		Reward and recognize good student behavior publicly
		Provide frequent, positive feedback to parents when children are behaving appropriately.
		(Co-Supporter Strategies)
		Invite and encourage adult volunteers to organize after-school programs for students that will provide a enriched, safe learning opportunities.
		Organize campus and community clean-ups.
		Allow school facilities to be used by community service groups, especially neighborhood watch groups, boys and girls activity groups (such as boy or girl scouts, campfire).
		Help parents and community establish safe houses for children in route to and from school.
		(Co-Learner Strategies)
		Organize workshops for parents on positive parenting and discipline.
		Provide training for parent and teachers in collaboration and problem-solving skills and strategies.
		(Co-decision-maker strategies)
		Establish a school climate committee to solve discipline problem and promote a positive school climate.

School already does	School Should try	**Home-School-Community Relations** *All of the activities suggested above will help to build a strong partnership. A few other activities are:*
		(Co-Communicator Strategies)
		Use a variety of communication techniques to foster two-way communication between home and school about all aspects of school life.
		Create a warm and welcoming environment that enables parents from diverse backgrounds to feel comfortable at school, e.g., welcome signs in the languages of the parents, office staff or community liaisons that speak the major languages of the parents, school newsletters translated into the primary community languages.
		Provide frequent, positive feedback to parents when children are behaving appropriately.
		(Co-Supporter Strategies)
		Establish a parent center at school where parents can meet, organize, socialize.
		Identify community resources that can assist the school and parents.
		(Co-Learner Strategies)
		(Co-teacher Strategies)
		(Co-decision-maker, advocate strategies)

Two Case Studies of School-Family Partnership Development

St. John the Baptist School New York City	Willard Model School Norfolk, VA
Background: St. John the Baptist School, which includes kindergarten through eighth grade, was established when four schools (Three K-5, and one middle, 6-8 school) were closed because of declining enrollments and financial difficulties. All four schools served children from similar low income backgrounds. The current ethnic composition of St. John the Baptist is 75% African American and 25% Hispanic. Creating a new culture from four was one of the first challenges facing the new staff at St. John the Baptist School. The goal the staff set for itself was to create a warm, welcoming and caring community which would unite students, parents and staff from the four different schools. Teachers and parents joined together to establish a shared mission.	**Background:** Willard Model School serves 575, K-5 students, 60% of whom are African-American, 39% are White, and 1% of other ethnic diversities. A high concentration of low-income children and low achievement by students, made Willard one of the 12 Norfolk Public Schools selected to receive district funds to establish a parent center and hire a community liaison. The school began a concerted effort to reach out to the community. Through Chapter I and district funds, the Parent Center is staffed by the Parent Activity Leader, who is knowledgeable of the community and who works with school staff and other community agencies to increase the involvement of parents at school and in learning activities with their children at home. Through the Center, an extensive learning program for parents and teachers has been implemented to strengthen the parent-teacher partnership.
Outcomes: The school's outreach efforts to parents have lead to: •A positive school clime and sense of family; •Many more parents and community members volunteering at school; •Dramatic increases in the number of parents attending school events; •More parents helping their children at home; •Children performing better academically; •More graduates receiving scholarships; •Graduates of St. John the Baptist having more success in high school and college.	**Outcomes:** The schools' outreach efforts to parents have led to: •75% of parents who attended quarterly curriculum nights; •80% of parents attending at least one parent workshop; •More parents volunteering at school; •More homework being completed and returned; •More parents helping their children at home; •Improved academic achievement by students; •Parents having more opportunities to develop their own skills and knowledge.

Actions to Enhance Home and School as Co-Communicators

St. John the Baptist School	Willard Model School
• School handbook given to each family with schoolwide goals and objectives as well as grade level expectations and requirements. Families review the handbook and sign an agreement that they will abide by the rules and expectations.	• Contact maintained with parents through notes, letters, telephone calls, home visits, conferences, and meetings, with the Parent Center Activity Leader playing an active role in facilitating communications between home and school.
• Annual calendar of school activities and events is given, with monthly updates listing meetings, report card dates, conference dates, etc.	• Parents surveyed to determine parent workshop topics and ways parents would like to help, as well as feedback sought on usefulness of activity calendars.
• School newsletter distributed six times a year.	• Calendar of events provided for parents.
• Beginning-of-the-year meeting which involves parents and teachers in small group discussions; teachers share ways parents can help at home (e.g., limiting TV time, providing a study area, checking on homework, providing homework supplies); teachers and parents exchange expectations.	• Curriculum review workshops held each nine weeks to help parents understand curriculum content for the quarter and to receive materials to use at home with child.
• Assignment notebooks are used to provide daily communication between home and school. Parents sign assignment book after homework is completed. Friendly reminder calls from principal and teachers have been essential to increase use of assignment notebooks, sign-off by parents, and homework completion by students.	• Extensive system of parent-teacher conferences. Conferences are encouraged any time and are scheduled four times a year. A decision to add the two additional conferences was made by the site-based management team, with one hour before and after school and teacher prep times used for the additional conferences. The district provides pupil-free days twice a year for the two regularly scheduled conferences. During the district conference days, teachers are available from 10:00 a.m. to 7:p.m. The Parent Activity Leader is available to assist parents during conferences.
• *Good new* notes are sent regularly, or comments are added to assignment book, or comments made on returned student work.	• District Homework Hot Line (4 to 8 p..m.) allows students and parents to know and get help with homework assignments. As a result, rate of return on homework has increased.
• Telephone calls to family made by teachers and principal.	• PAL Telethon is a committee of parents who call other parents to promote school activities and enhance parent-to-parent communication.
• Three-way conferences (parent-teacher-child) are held (principal attends if there is a need). All conferences result in action plans being developed.	

*See note at the end - page 6

Actions to Enhance Home and School as Co-Supporters

St. John the Baptist School	Willard Model School
• Held monthly activity meetings that bring parents, staff, and students together in ways that create a positive school climate and create a sense of community (HSR, SSE). For example: - Mother-Daughter basketball game; - Halloween party involving 100 parent volunteers; - International festival, 300 parents involved;. - Father/son basketball game with staff of local radio station; - Fashion show; - Awards/recognition ceremony. • Organized counseling and resource room. • Parents raised funds for needed science equipment. • Created many opportunities for family volunteers (each teacher agreed to recruit four parents, aunts, uncles, grandparents) to assist as door monitors, tutors, lunch room helpers, teachers' assistants, chaperones for field trips; yard duty assistants, typists; and organizers of other school and community projects. • Chapter 1 parents connected with local public school to receive Chapter 1 assistance.	• Established a Parent Center, which is the heart of the Willard parent outreach model. The Center is staffed by a Parent Activity Leader/Technician paid for by district funds. The Leader oversees the operation of the parent center and serves as a critical, non-threatening link between home and school. The Center is a place parents can call their own; provides space for meetings; has a game lending library; enables parents to feel comfortable with the school before moving to assist in the classroom; helps parents learn how to support their child's learning. • Through the work of the Parent Center Leader, parents connected with social service agencies. Social service and community agency staff also come to the center to assist parents. • Home visits made if parents are reluctant to come to school. • The Parent Activity Leader organized a wide variety of parent workshops designed to meet parent needs. • School staff provided after-school youth serving agencies with information on how to establish a homework time and space as part of after-school programs. • Established a game and computer home lending library to stimulate home learning activities.

Actions to Enhance Home and School as Co-Learners	
St. John the Baptist School	**Willard Model School**
Monthly PTA meetings have an educational focus on such topics as discipline, sex education, testing, reading at home, child abuse, communication between parent and child, dealing with adolescents. • Parents given information on how they can help their children, and expectations were discussed. • Meetings and Saturday workshops held which focus on reading and math. • Teachers and parents meet together to discuss school issues, which has facilitated learning by both teachers and parents. • Conferences and other communication strategies have facilitated both parent and teacher learning. • St. John's parents connected with local public school Chapter I Program to provide workshops and learning materials for home use.	• Beginning-of-the-year workshops for teachers on parent-teacher conference skills, multicultural awareness and teacher expectations, working with parents and volunteers, and designing homework assignments. • Parent Activity Leader provided information to staff on effective strategies for working with African-American families. • Workshops for parents offered on parent-teacher conference skills (a need identified as an outgrowth of holding more frequent conferences). • Curriculum workshops held every nine weeks. • Parent workshops organized by the Parent Center in response to parent interests; for example: parent effectiveness training, study skills and homework strategies, parents as partners classes, using the newspaper, computer education classes, discipline seminars, child abuse, financial planning, mental health programs, nutrition workshops, dental health classes, stress management seminars, exercise classes Child care and transportation provided. • Home visits by Parent Activity Leader and teachers to share community resources, learning materials, books for a home library. Parents are shown ways to set up a study center and how to help their children. Student progress is shared and an action plan developed. Home visits have greatly expanded parent confidence and involvement with the school.

Actions to Enhance Home and School as Co-Teachers

St. John the Baptist School	Willard Model School
• Parent and community volunteers work as tutors and classroom assistants helping in a variety of academic areas, such as implementing a thinking skills program, teaching arts and crafts and foreign languages. • Parents involved as teachers through daily homework monitoring. • Parents involved as teachers through library research projects, family project worksheets, home computer loan program for math and reading improvement, home reading program, and Family Math. • Teachers, through meetings, conferences, and materials, are teaching parents how to support their children's learning at school and at home.	• Parents involved as volunteers in the classroom working with students. Each teacher made a commitment to recruit at least four parent or other adult volunteers to work either in the classroom or at school. • Parents involved as teachers through daily homework assignments. • During PAL Period parents asked to work with their children using materials specifically selected for each child to supplement classroom instruction. • PAL Packet, home learning calendars with K-5 activities, provided to extend and reinforce school skills. Parents are asked to give feedback at the end of the month; 50% responded each month. Teachers used calendar activities during sharing time and for writing activities to reinforce what students did at home. • Summer learning packets, compiled by grade level teams throughout the year during planning times, are provided for parents and students at the end of the year. Packets include worksheets, games, writing assignments, enrichment activities, and a bibliography of books available in the public library. • Home visits provided parents with learning activities to do with their children. • Parents given opportunity to check out computers and games from the home-lending library.

Actions to Enhance Home and School as Co-Advisos, Decision-Makers, and Advocates

St. John the Baptist School	Willard Model School
• Established and built a strong PTA with active participation of principal, teachers and parents together on board of directors. • Parents and teachers organized activities that generated a sense of community. • Four-week leadership development program for PTA has built considerable trust and comfortable interactions between parents and staff and has led to an active role for the PTA in the educational process. • PTA led community action through phone calls, petitions, and letters to get more police protection for students going to and from school.	• A strong PTA exists with parents, teachers and community members serving on the Board of Directors. • Parents organized and staff a student publishing center as a resource for enhancing classroom instruction. • PTA, in cooperation with teachers, finance and organize schoolwide cultural programs for students. • PTA and teachers organize community events such as *Pizza Night, Hot Dog Night* and *Spaghetti Night* to develop better community relations. • PTA representatives attend all school board meetings and community meetings that affect the school. • As a site-based management school, parent representatives serve on the SBM Team which makes decisions for the school. • A parent representative serves on all school committees.

Note: The above actions undertaken by these schools help to illustrate the comprehensive approach used by each school staff in developing its partnership program. The activities reflect how the schools are embedding characteristics of effective schools and successful home learning environments in the home and community. The activities have been clustered under the five partnership roles (co-communicators, co-supporters, co-learners, co-teachers, and co-advocates and decision-makers). Frequently, the activities fulfill multiple roles, however, for purposes of illustration, the activity has usually been listed only once under its primary function.

Case Study Reading and Discussion Guide

Co-Communicators

1. What are your reactions to what the schools have done to improve communications between home and school and create a more welcoming environment for parents? How might these changes help parents support student learning at home?

   What my school has done to strengthen co-communications.

Co-Supporters

2. What are your reactions to what the schools have done to support parents? How has this support led to parent support for the school?

   What my school has done to develop co-supporters and provide support for families.

Co-Learners

3. What are your reactions to what the schools have done to prove learning opportunities for parents and staff? How might these raise parent expectations, confidence and skills enabling them to better support their children's learning.

   What my school has done to provide learning opportunities for parents and school staff.

Case Study Reading and Discussion Guide

Co-Teachers

4. What are your reactions to the ways parents are being involved as teachers with their children at school and at home?

What my school has done to promote parents as co-teachers.

Co-Decision-makers, Advisors, Advocates

5. What opportunities do parents and teachers have to serve in the role of co-decision-maker, advisor and advocate? How do you think these opportunities have influenced the creation of a welcoming environment and parents' efforts to support student learning at school and at home?

What my school has done to strengthen the role of parents and school staff as co-advocates, decision-makers and advisors.

6. Other things I learned from reading these case studies?:

NEXT STEPS PLANNING SHEET

Based on what has been learned, the strengths of our school's current school-family partnership program are:

Our school currently needs to strengthen its partnership program in the following areas:

Families are currently involved in home learning/teaching activities in the following ways:

NEXT STEPS PLANNING SHEET (continued)

Based on what has been learned, the next steps to take to strengthen our school-family partnership program are:

Step / Activity	Timeline	Resources Needed

Who else needs to be involved for these steps to be effective?

What problems might be encountered in taking these next steps?

Building School-Family Partnerships for Learning:
Workshops for Urban Educators

School District Policies And Supports For School-Family Partnerships

Workshop Leader's Guide

Developed for
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
U.S. Department of Education
by Dr. Nancy Feyl Chavkin

OVERVIEW

KEY CONCEPT

District-level officials can make a major contribution to effective home-school partnerships and parent involvement in home learning. Key components of district-level plans for strengthening home-school partnerships are: (1) policies and (2) supports for policies related to parent involvement.

RATIONALE AND PURPOSE

Policies and supports for policies on parent involvement in home-school partnerships and home learning are critical first steps for school districts interested in strengthening parent involvement. Home-school partnerships involve mutual collaboration between parents and educators in promoting student achievement. Educators need to take the lead in creating such partnerships.

The purpose of this workshop is to focus participant thinking on the importance of policies and supports for policies and to provide knowledge that would assist in the development of district policies and supports for these policies.Supports are needed for the development, implementation and maintenance of policies.

This workshop provides a framework for understanding the relationship between policies and the supports for these policies and programs. Examples of policies and supports for policies from school districts which have done substantial work in this area are utilized. Districts that develop parent involvement programs without developing policies and supports for policies risk losing their programs when administrations, funding, or other key factors change.

LEARNER OBJECTIVES

By the end of this workshop, participants will be able to:

1. Identify and explain the key components of policy and support for policy about parent involvement.

2. Define and describe effective policies and supports for policies on home-school partnerships by reference to current research and practice.

3. Recall and discuss school board policies dealing with parent involvement from at least two different school districts.

4. Talk about the strategies and resources used by at least two different school districts to support policy about parent involvement.

ACTIVITIES	TIME ESTIMATE
#1 Introduction and Ice-Breaker	20 min
#2 Policy and Support for Policy on School-Family Partnerships	15 min
#3 Sample Policies	25 min
#4 Developing, Implementing, and Maintaining Policy Supports	15 min
#5 Case Studies of School District Support	30 min
#6 Summary and Follow-Up Ideas	15 min
Total	120 min

Transparency masters and handouts can be located in the sections following this presenter's guide.

WORKSHOP PREPARATIONS

The workshop leader will need to read and study the material outlined here and make decisions about the appropriateness of each activity to the intended audience. The material should be adapted to the leader's personal style and background. It may be helpful to read the Background Information sheet for the research rationale behind this workshop and some of the articles suggested in the annotated summaries section. Also, talk with school district personnel who have leadership in the area of policies on parent involvement and school-family partnerships. A flow chart of how policy is made in the district may also be helpful. The leader may want to have one for reference to distribute during the workshop.

This workshop needs to be adapted to the audience. The first part of the workshop on the policy and supports for policy should either be omitted or covered in only a short review if your audience is a group of experienced policy makers. In a district where school-family partnership policies already exist, you may want to skip the section on policy and move directly to the support section. In a mixed audience such as a strategic planning team that includes parents, teachers, business representatives, and community organizations as well as administrators and school board members, it is essential that you do the workshop in its entirety so that everyone understands the terminology and purpose of school-family partnership policy.

The leader may wish to develop assessment tools for examining the needs and interests of participants either prior to the workshop or immediately upon arrival. At a minimum, the leader should be well-informed about the current status regarding policies and supports for policies on school-family partnerships in the district(s) represented in the workshop. To this end, the leader may wish to send participants a pre-workshop mailing which outlines the purpose and objectives of the session and requests that they bring copies of their district's policies dealing with school-family partnerships. The leader should also have available or ask participants to bring any relevant federal (Chapter 1, Bilingual, Migrant) or state policies on school-family partnerships.

The leader will help the participants describe the advantages and disadvantages of different types of school policies and supports for policies using discussion and the flip chart. During the evaluation and summary activity, the leader will encourage participants to begin to assess their own district's policies about school-family partnerships and plan their further exploration of this topic. The leader will also give participants the opportunity to evaluate their own learning in this workshop and the usefulness of the information presented.

This workshop will be a first step in action-planning for many participants, and they will need time and encouragement to follow up on some of the ideas presented here. Be prepared to be available for questions/consultation following the session. The group may even want to reconvene at a later date and talk about what has happened to their ideas and plans. No two districts will develop the same kind of policy and support systems. The leader will need to stress the importance of each district developing its own policy and supports for policy on school-family partnerships. It is crucial that policy and supports reflect the nature of each individual district.

Research on District Policies and School-Family Partnerships

Research tells us that parents and community members are part of the rich resources and skills that each school district has. Walberg's (1984) synthesis of studies on academic learning reveals that parents influence key determinants of cognitive, affective, and behavioral learning. Henderson's *The Evidence Continues To Grow: Parent Involvement Improves Student Achievement* (1987) summarizes 49 research studies and documents the incontrovertible fact that parent involvement increases student achievement. Rhoda Becher's (1984) review of the literature on parent involvement in early childhood education supports the notion that parent education programs improve children's language skills, test performance, and behavior. Furthermore, there are other important benefits of family participation in the schools. Rich (1985) found that parent involvement in education helped produce increases in student attendance, decreases in the drop-out rate, positive parent-child communication, improvement of student attitudes and behavior, and more parent-community support of the school.

Regardless of the communities they serve, all school districts can develop effective programs to involve parents in the education of their children. James Comer's (1988) work, which began with the Yale University Child Study Canter and two inner-city schools in New Haven, Connecticut and now includes more than 50 schools around the country, shows that supportive bonds between home and school can increase academic achievement and improve attendance and discipline without any change in the socioeconomic makeup of the schools. Herb Walberg's (1984) examination of 29 studies on family involvement in education found that participation in parent involvement in education programs is twice as predictive of achievement as socioeconomic status.

Chavkin and Williams' study (1987) found that more than 70% of both superintendents and school board presidents believed it was the school district's responsibility to provide a policy and guidelines for involving parents in their children's education. Parents' responses were very similar to administrators' responses. Most parents wanted the school to take the lead in parent involvement and give them ideas about working with their children, particularly in the area of homework. In short, both parents and educators want school district to provide policies and supports for parent involvement in education.

Research tells us that school districts with policies about parent involvement have more parent involvement. In a study by Chavkin and Williams' (1987), they found that the existence of formal, written policies about parent involvement led to increased parent involvement activities. Policies about parent involvement in education and support for these policies about parent involvement in education are two key facilitating factors.

Williams and Chavkin (1990) used a key informant approach to identify and describe the essential elements of promising parent involvement programs in five southwestern states. Besides written policies, other elements that support educators working with families include:

1. Administrative support (funds, materials/product resources, e.g. meeting space, communication equipment, computers, duplication/media equipment and staff)

2. Training (for staff as well as parents and community members)

3. Partnership approach (joint planning, goal setting, definition of roles, program assessment, development of supports, needs sensing, setting standards)

4. Two-way communications (frequent and regular)

5. Networking (to share information, resources, and technical expertise)

6. Evaluation (formative evaluations to allow districts to make policy revisions on a continuous basis.

In each case, the school board set the official district policy on parent and community involvement and then provided administrative support for policy implementation. Individual schools within the district developed their own strategies for implementation with support from the central office as necessary.

The Institute for Responsive Education's research (Davies, 1987) points out that because school districts have unique features which make them resistant to change, policies about parent involvement are necessary. The goals of schools as organizations are diffuse; the method of goal achievement is fragmented and responsibility is diffused among administrators, counselors, teachers, families, and students. In addition, the informal norms of schools are powerful, and the formal structure is complicated and not always well-coordinated. These organizational realities make the idea of parent involvement in education an idea that is both difficult to introduce and maintain without a formal, written policy. Davies (1987) makes a recommendation that a mandate or policy for parent involvement is essential. His work and the study by the Institute for Responsive Education clearly show that policy is a critical element if the natural organizational resistance to change is to be overcome.

References can be found in the Annotated Summaries from Research and Practice Literature located in the handouts.

Activity #1: Introduction and Icebreaker: What Did Your Family Do at Home to Help You be Successful in School?

Objective: The participants will become acquainted with the structure of the workshops and with each other, and become personally involved with the concept of how schools and families both contribute to childrens' learning as a springboard for discussing the role of policies in support of school-family partnerships.

Recommended Time: 20 minutes

Directions and Procedures:

1. **Introductions and icebreaker activity.**

   a. Introduce yourself and present the key concept that is the basis for the workshop series. Explain that your task in this workshop will be to explore how district policies can support and encourage home learning environments and school-family partnerships. *Use T-1.*

   Key Concept: "Every family functions as a home learning environment, regardless of its structure, economic level, ethnic or cultural background. Consequently, every family has the potential to support and improve the academic achievement of its children."

   b. Before entering into the discussion of the policy, explain that you would like to explore home learning environments on a more personal level. Ask participants to reflect for a moment on their own family and think about the following question: **"What did your family do to help you be successful in school?"**

   After participants have had a moment to reflect, repeat the question and ask for volunteers to provide an example of how their family helped them to succeed in school. Record answers on a flip chart. Be prepared to offer one or two examples of your own.

   When you have a number of different examples, point out to the group that the examples represent a variety of strategies. Be sure to emphasize that not all of the strategies required parents to *come to school* and that some of the strategies happen at home. Summarize by saying that all of these examples represent "parent involvement" and that the challenge for the workshop participants will be to identify/develop district level policies that support and encourage this range of strategies.

2. **Workshop Overview**

   a. Briefly mention to participants that this is one in a series of workshops for school staffs included in a sourcebook entitled "Building Family-School Partnerships for Learning: Workshops for Urban Educators." *Use T-2.*

Building School-Family Partnerships for Learning: Workshops for Urban Educators

Workshop 1: Families as Learning Environments
Workshop 2: Communication Skills and Strategies
Workshop 3: Homework and Home Learning Activities
Workshop 4: School Programs and Practices
Workshop 5: School District Policies and Supports for School-Family Partnerships

The Office of Research within the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, produced this sourcebook for educators attempting to assist urban parents in strengthening home learning activities among elementary school students (grades K-6). There are four overarching themes of the sourcebook that you may wish to briefly explain and suggest how this workshop "fits in" with the other workshops in the sourcebook. ***Use T-3.***

b. Present an overview of the District Policy workshop using the information provided in the Rationale and Purpose section of this leader's guide. Present the key concepts, purpose and learners' objectives for the district workshop. This workshop will focus on the leadership needed at the district level if school-family partnerships at the school and classroom level are to succeed. This leadership needs to come from the district's board of education, as it promulgates policies and provides supports to undergird these policies. ***Use T-4, T-5, T-6.***

Activity #2: Policy and Supports for Policy on School-Family Partnerships

Objective: To identify key components of policy and supports for policy related to school-family partnerships.

Recommended time: 15 minutes

Directions and Procedures:

1. Explain that for the purposes of our discussion, we will use "policy" to talk about the formal, written policies of a school district. These are the issues on which the school board takes an official vote and position. We will not use policy to refer to what schools actually or usually do; we'll use it in reference to the official posture of a school district regarding a given issue. The phrase "school district policies" refers to the rules and regulations that are written down, officially approved by the board of education, and intended as guidelines for all in the district.

   We'll use the word "support" in much the same way as you are used to referring to support. The difference is that we will talk about support during three different stages of policy--development, implementation, and maintenance. Support is what helps a policy come into formal existence (development), what helps translate a policy "from paper to practice" (implementation), and what helps us continue the practices (maintenance). ***Use T-7.***

2. a. Ask: *What should be included in school district policies on school-family partnerships?*

   Ask participants what requirements for parent involvement they believe should be stipulated in school board policy. Instruct them to turn to someone seated beside them and in share-pairs identify 2-4 concepts that they believe should be embedded in district-wide policy.

   Ask for volunteers to call out responses, one at a time, and record these on chart paper. When you have completed the list for the whole group, present the National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education (NCPIE) guidelines by uncovering them one at a time and relating group responses listed on the chart paper to relevant NCPIE recommendations. ***Use T-8 and T -9.*** Refer participants to ***Handout #1*** NCPIE Guidelines.

   Ask for a show of hands of those who are familiar with the National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education (NCPIE). Explain that this is a group of more than 25 education-related organizations which recommends that all district-wide policies on parent involvement contain the following concepts:

NCPIE Guidelines

General Parameters:

Opportunities for all parents to become informed about how the parent involvement program in their respective school will be designed and carried out;

Participation of parents who lack literacy skills or who do not speak English;

Involvement of parents of children at all ages and grade levels;

Recognition of diverse family structures, circumstances, and responsibilities, including differences that might impede parent participation. The person(s) responsible for a child may not be the child's biological parents, and policies and programs should include participation by all persons interested in the child's educational progress.

Program Requirements:

Regular information for parents about their children's participation and progress in specific educational programs and the objectives of those programs;

Opportunities for parents to assist in the instructional process at school and at home.

Resource Considerations:

Professional development for teachers and staff to enhance their effectiveness with parents;

Linkages with social service agencies and community groups to address key family and community issues;

Ask participants to compare the group's listing (on a flip chart) with NCPIE's listing and to note any discrepancies. Allow opportunity for individual comments or questions concerning any discrepancies. Finally, ask if anyone in the group has a concern with the school board stipulating any one of the 8 concepts outlined by NCPIE or, if in the alternative, anyone would like to speak on the importance of including these eight guidelines. You may wish to close this section by suggesting that the role of a school board policy on parent involvement is to give direction and provide guidance that would ensure a common standard for all school level programs. At the same time, the policy should allow schools some latitude and flexibility in program design so that they can address special needs and interests and/or use unique resources at the school level.

3. At this point, you may wish to make reference to any existing national, state or local legislation/policies that pertain to policies on parent involvement in home learning. If time permits, refer participants to ***Handout #2*** and present Chapter One Flexibility Guideline Excerpts. ***Use T-10.***

Chapter One Requirements*

Make Chapter One Local Education Agency (LEA) personnel, including pupil services personnel, available to parents;

Convene a district-wide or building-level annual meeting of the parents of participating children as well as providing opportunities for regular meetings;

Provide timely information about the program to parents;

Make parents aware of parental involvement requirements and other relevant provisions of the program; and

Provide information, to the extent practicable, in a language and form that parents can understand.

**Note: The Chapter 1 requirements listed here are based on the 1988 Hawkins-Stafford Amendments. Presenters should consult with their Chapter 1 office to see if these requirements have changed subject to the proposed 1993 reauthorization by Congress.*

Activity #3: Sample Policies

Objective: To familiarize participants with at least two board policies on school-family partnerships.

Recommended time: 25 minutes

Directions and Procedures:

Prior to the workshop, check to see if your state has a policy on parent involvement. If so, you'll want to reproduce this to augment materials provided in the Workbook. In addition, be sure to procure copies of local school board policies governing districts represented in your audience.

1. Divide participants into groups of four to five members. Assign one sample policy to each group. ***Handouts 3-7*** are sample policies.
2. Instruct groups to read their assigned policy and choose a recorder who will jot down responses to the following questions based on small group discussions. Refer participants to ***Handout 8***. ***Use T-11***.

Sample Policy Questions

What are the goals of this policy and how clearly are they defined?

What steps does the policy say will be taken to achieve these goals?

Is there any reference to resources needed?

How well does this policy meet the NCPIE guidelines? Chapter One requirements?

Which elements of this policy would be the most useful for your school district?

3. Monitor activity by walking around and helping participants with their pacing, (i.e. apprising them of remaining time, and answering any questions they may have).
4. Facilitate reporting out and sharing in whole group.

Activity #4: Developing, Implementing, and Maintaining Policy Supports

Objectives: To summarize what supports are needed during the stages of development, implementation and maintenance.

Recommended Time: 15 minutes

Directions and Procedures:

This brief mini-lecture is to reinforce the concept that development is only the first of three stages in which policies require support in order to be effective. This information will be the basis for discussion during the case study exercise in the next activity. You can use *T-7* to remind participants of the three stages (development, implementation, maintenance) that you introduced earlier in the workshop.

1. State to participants the previous activity provided them the opportunity to review several sample policies. Remind participants that policies need support at all critical stages: development, implementation, and maintenance and that now you will review the NCPIE recommendations for providing support at these stages. ***Use T-12, T-13 and T-14.***

Developing Policy

NCPIE recommends that school districts support the development of policies in the following ways:

Assess parent needs and interests about ways of working with schools; and

Set clear and measurable goals with parent and community input.

Ask participants if they are aware of any district-wide effort to assess parents needs and interests. If so, ask one respondent about the nature and scope of this effort, the results, and when it was conducted.

Implementing Policy

NCPIE recommends that school districts support the implementation of policies in the following ways:

Hire and train a parent liaison to directly contact parents and coordinate parent activities. The liaison should be bilingual as needed and sensitive to the needs of parents and the community, including the non-English speaking community.

Develop public relations to inform parents, businesses, and the community about parent involvement policies and programs through newsletters, slide shows, videotapes, local newspapers, and such.

Recognize the importance of a community's historic, ethnic, linguistic, or cultural resources in generating interest in parent participation. Even when there are problems, such as desegregation issues, a parent involvement program can serve as a forum for discussion and a conduit for change.

Use creative forms of communications between educators and parents. This may include parent/teacher conferences which yield individual parent/child and teacher/child plans, newsletters mailed to parents, etc.

Mobilize parents as volunteers in the school assisting teachers with instructional tasks, lunchroom duties, and administrative functions. Parents might act as volunteer tutors, classroom aides, and invited speakers.

Train educators to include techniques for surmounting barriers between parents and schools so that teachers, administrators and parents interact as partners.

Point out to participants that when a policy on school-family partnerships is developed and adopted, school districts need to begin thinking about what they can do to support the successful **implementation** of such policies. Invite participants to comment on how or why this could be an important key or to share any concerns they may have with the recommendation. Or invite participants to comment on which of these recommendations currently exist in their district.

Maintaining Policy

Now that we've looked at supports for policy development and implementation we'll turn our attention to the maintenance of support. This **maintenance** of policies is perhaps the most-often overlooked part of the process. Our attention tends to drift once we've developed and implemented policies. Present the NCPIE recommendations for maintaining the momentum and enthusiasm for policies following their implementation:

Integrate information and assistance with other aspects of the total learning environment. Parents should have access to information about such services as health care and nutrition programs provided by schools or community agencies.

Schedule activities flexibly to reach diverse parent groups.

Evaluate the effectiveness of parent involvement programs and activities on a regular basis.

2. If time permits, summarize this section with the "typology of supports." Ask participants to share with a neighbor what they believe to be the most important supports for each of these three. Then allow for quick reporting out. Record responses on a flip chart. ***Use T-15.*** Also call attention to ***Handout #9,*** the National School Boards Association's *Implications for School Board Policy,* and suggest that participants may also wish to review this document if they are considering developing or revising district level policies related to school-family partnerships.

Activity #5: Case Studies of School District Policies

Objective: To introduce participants to other school districts efforts to develop, implement and maintain school-family partnerships.

Recommended time: 30 minutes

Directions and Procedures:

1. Explain to participants that they are about to engage in an activity that will introduce them to examples of how some school districts have developed, implemented and maintained school-family partnerships. Point out to participants that the focus here is upon what can be done at the district level -- by the school board, the superintendent, and the central office staff -- to support the different kinds of parent involvement programs and activities that operate in individual schools. Our focus is still upon ways and means that districts can enable and support implementation of written policies while allowing flexibility and latitude for each school to develop the programs that best serve its constituents.

2. Next, divide participants into small groups of four or six participants. Assign each group one case study and provide each participant in the group a copy of their case study (***Handouts #10, #11, and #12***). Also provide participants with a copy of ***Handout #13***, the Case study questions. Allow a few minutes for participants to read their case study.

3. Then instruct groups to begin their discussion and analysis of the assigned case study. Ask participants to analyze the district's use of each strategy by considering the following issues. Refer participants to ***Handout #13***. ***Use T-16***.

Case Study Questions

How was the strategy implemented?

What are the potential benefits and liabilities of the strategy--including costs and other resource requirements?

What evidence of effect or positive impact is presented?

To what extent does the strategy appear to be transportable to other districts?

4. Ask each group to report out. Depending on time, you may want to limit each group's reporting out to one of the four questions stated above.

Activity #6: Summary and Follow-Up Ideas

Objective: To summarize the key concepts explored in this workshop and to suggest some possible next steps.

Recommended time: 15 minutes

Directions and Procedures:

1. Summarize the key concepts of the workshop for participants or ask them to brainstorm what they believe are the key concepts covered by the workshop material.

2. State that before participants leave, you would like them to reflect on how they might put some of the information shared today into practice in their own districts. Direct participants to ***Handout #14***, "Checklist of Your District's Policies," and ask them to complete this checklist to the best their ability and to use the information as a first step in assessing the current state of policies in their district. Note: If district teams are attending the workshop let them work together as a whole group while leader facilitates. Otherwise, instruct participants to complete this individually. Allow 3-5 minutes for this culminating activity, and challenge participants to take this checklist back to their district for further consideration, discussion, and action.

3. Have participants fill out two copies of the ***Handout #15***, Next Steps form. Each participant will take one copy with them and leave one with the workshop leader. **You may want to provide carbon paper. Allow 4-5 minutes for this activity.**

   Fill out question #1 only
   Post each person's policy areas
   Pair those on similar interests and allow time for discussion on question #2-3

4. Thank the group and encourage them to take their learnings, insights, and commitments back to colleagues unable to attend. Challenge them to take some positive step toward renewed district support within the next few weeks.

SCHOOL DISTRICT POLICIES AND SUPPORTS FOR SCHOOL-FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS

Transparencies

T-1	Key Concept
T-2	Building School-Family Partnerships
T-3	Soucebook Themes
T-4	Key Concept
T-5	Purpose
T-6	Learner Objectives
T-7	Workshop Overview
T-8/9	NCPIE Guidelines on Parent Involvement Programs
T-10	Chapter One Requirements
T-11	Sample Policy Questions
T-12	NCPIE Guidelines for Developing Policy
T-13	NCPIE Guidelines for Implementing Policy
T-14	NCPIE Guidelines for Maintaining Policy
T-15	Typology of Supports
T-16	Case Study Questions

KEY CONCEPT

Every family functions as a home learning environment, regardless of its structure, economic level, ethnic or cultural background.

Consequently, every family has the potential to support and improve the academic achievement of its children.

BUILDING SCHOOL-FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS FOR LEARNING

WORKSHOPS FOR URBAN EDUCATORS

Workshop 1: Families as Learning Environments

Workshop 2: Communication Skills and Strategies

Workshop 3: Homework and Home Learning Activities

Workshop 4: School Programs and Practices

Workshop 5: School District Policies and Supports

SOURCEBOOK THEMES

- Family Strengths
- School-family Partnerships
- Home Learning Environments
- Home Learning Activities

KEY CONCEPT

Policy and support for policy are necessary for effective school-family partnership programs.

PURPOSE

To provide knowledge on the development of district policies and supports for policies to ensure effective school-family partnership programs.

LEARNER OBJECTIVES

- Identify key components of policy and support for policy on parent involvement.
- Define and describe "policy" and "supports for policy".
- Discuss at least 2 board policies on school-family partnerships.
- Describe efforts of 2 different school districts to support policy on parent involvement.

WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

- Developing Policy
- Supporting Policies
  - Developing Supports
  - Implementing Supports
  - Maintaining Supports

NCPIE GUIDELINES

◆ General Parameters

- Provisions for parental input when designing programs.
- Provisions for non-English speaking parents and those deficient in literacy skills.
- Programs for parents at all grade levels.
- Programs that recognize family diversity.

NCPIE GUIDELINES
(Continued)

◆ Program Requirements

- Regular reports on children's progress and on curriculum objectives.
- Opportunities for parents to assist with instruction at home and at school.

◆ Resource Considerations

- Training for teachers and staff.
- Linkages with social service and community agencies serving families and children.

CHAPTER ONE
REQUIREMENTS

- Make Chapter One Local Education Agency (LEA) personnel available to parents.
- Convene an annual meeting with parents.
- Provide information on program to parents.
- Make parents aware of program requirements.
- Provide information in a language that parents can understand.

SAMPLE POLICY QUESTIONS

- **What are the goals of this policy and how clearly are they defined?**
- **What steps does the policy say will be taken to achieve these goals?**
- **Is there any reference to resources needed?**
- **How well does this policy meet the NCPIE guidelines? Chapter One requirements?**
- **Which elements of this policy would be the most useful for your school district?**

NCPIE GUIDELINES

DEVELOPING POLICY

- Assess parent needs and interests.
- Set clear and measurable goals based on parent and community input.

NCPIE GUIDELINES

IMPLEMENTING POLICY

- Hire and train a parent liaison.
- Develop public information and relations component for parent involvement program.
- Recognize the importance of the community's unique cultural attributes while developing and marketing the program.
- Use creative forms of communications.
- Mobilize parents as volunteers.
- Provide training in "partnership" approach.

NCPIE GUIDELINES

MAINTAINING POLICY

- **Integrate information and assistance with other programs.**
- **Flexible scheduling**
- **Evaluation**

TYPOLOGY OF SUPPORTS

DEVELOPMENT	IMPLEMENTATION	MAINTENANCE

CASE STUDY QUESTIONS

- How was each strategy implemented?
- What appear to be the potential benefits and costs of the strategy?
- What evidence of effect or positive impact is provided?
- To what extent does the strategy seem to be transportable?

Building School-Family Partnerships for Learning: Workshops for Urban Educators

School District Policies and Supports for School-Family Partnerships

Participant Handouts

Overview:

Key Concept, Rationale and Purpose, and Learner Objectives

Handouts:

1. Developing School-Family Partnerships: Guidelines for Schools and School Districts, National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education (NCPIE)
2. Chapter 1: Flexibility Guidelines (excerpts)
3. Board Policy: McAllen, TX
4. Board Policy: Los Angeles Unified School District
5. Board Policy: Baltimore City Public Schools
6. Board Policy: Pomona Unified School District
7. Board Policy: San Diego City Schools
8. Policy Questions
9. Implications for School Board Policy - NSBA Report
10. Case Study: Prince George's County, Maryland
11. Case Study: San Diego City Schools, California
12. Case Study: Indianapolis Public Schools, Indiana
13. Case Study Questions
14. Checklist of Your District's Policy
15. Next Steps in District Planning

Annotated Summaries from Research and Practice Literature

OVERVIEW

KEY CONCEPT

District-level officials can make a major contribution to effective home-school partnerships and parent involvement in home learning. Key components of district-level plans for strengthening home-school partnerships are: (1) policies, and (2) supports for polices related to parent involvement.

RATIONALE AND PURPOSE

Policies and supports for policies on parent involvement in home-school partnerships and home learning are critical first steps for school districts interested in strengthening parent involvement. Home-school partnerships involve mutual collaboration between parents and educators in promoting student achievement. Educators need to take the lead in creating such partnerships.

The purpose of this workshop is to focus participant thinking on the importance of policies and supports for policies and to provide knowledge that would assist in the development of district policies and supports for these policies.Supports are needed for the development, implementation and maintenance of policies.

This workshop provides a framework for understanding the relationship between policies and the supports for these policies and programs. Examples of policies and supports for policies from school districts which have done substantial work in this area are utilized. Districts that develop parent involvement programs without developing policies and supports for policies risk losing their programs when administrations, funding, or other key factors change.

LEARNER OBJECTIVES

By the end of this workshop, participants will be able to:

1. Identify and explain the key components of policy and support for policy about parent involvement.

2. Define and describe effective policies and supports for policies on home-school partnerships by reference to current research and practice.

3. Recall and discuss school board policies dealing with parent involvement from at least two different school districts.

4. Talk about the strategies and resources used by at least two different school districts to support policy about parent involvement.

DEVELOPING FAMILY/SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS:

GUIDELINES FOR SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL DISTRICTS

NCPIE

National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education

Introduction:

The National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education (NCPIE) is dedicated to the development of family/school partnerships. Based on the broad experience of NCPIE members, this brochure recommends specific ways teachers, administrators, and community leaders can strengthen relationships between schools and parents.

By exchanging information, sharing in decision making, helping at school, and collaborating in the child's learning, parents *can* become partners in the educational process. Research clearly shows that parent involvement encourages student achievement.

Certainly, federal and state leaders are increasingly aware of the pivotal role that parents and the community play in the education of our children. This is apparent in the Chapter 1 law and other federal programs that mandate consultation and collaboration with parents. Many state and district policies stipulate parent involvement not only for the Chapter 1 program but for other programs and grade levels as well.

As the momentum for ongoing, organized parent participation at the school and district level increases, so does the demand for parent involvement program information. What follows are some general policy suggestions, keys to successful programs, and specific program ideas.

What a Policy Should Include:

The formulation of policies should include input from teachers, administrators, parents, students, persons from youth-serving groups, and the community.

The policies should contain the following concepts:

- Opportunities for all parents to become informed about how the parent involvement program will be designed and carried out;
- Participation of parents who lack literacy skills or who do not speak English;
- Regular information for parents about their child's participation and progress in specific educational programs and the objectives of those programs;
- Opportunities for parents to assist in the instructional process at school and at home;
- Professional development for teachers and staff to enhance their effectiveness with parents;
- Linkages with social service agencies and community groups to address key family and community issues;
- Involvement of parents of children at all ages and grade levels;
- Recognition of diverse family structures, circumstances and responsibilities, including differences that might impede parent participation. The person(s) responsible for a child may not be the child's biological parent(s) and policies and programs should include participation by all persons interested in the child's educational progress.

Handout #

Keys to Success:

Based on information from actual programs, there are several keys to successfully involving parents in school activities:

- Assess parent needs and interests about ways of working with the schools;
- Set clear and measurable goals with parent and community input;
- Hire and train a parent liaison to directly contact parents and coordinate parent activities. The liaison should be bilingual as needed and sensitive to the needs of parents and the community, including the non-English speaking community;
- Develop public relations to inform parents, businesses, and the community about parent involvement policies and programs through newsletters, slide shows, videotapes, local newspapers, and such;
- Recognize the importance of a community's historic, ethnic, linguistic, or cultural resources in generating interest in parent participation. Even when there are problems, such as desegregation issues, a parent involvement program can serve as a forum for discussion and a conduit for change;
- Use creative forms of communication between educators and parents. This may include parent/teacher conferences which yield individual parent/child and teacher/child plans, newsletters mailed to parents, etc;
- Mobilize parents as volunteers in the school assisting teachers with instructional tasks, assisting in the lunchroom, and helping with administrative office functions. Parents might act as volunteer tutors, classroom aides, and invited speakers;
- Train educators to include techniques for surmounting barriers between parents and schools so that teachers, administrators, and parents interact as partners;
- Integrate information and assistance with other aspects of the total learning environment. Parents should have access to information about such services as health care and nutrition programs provided by schools or community agencies;
- Schedule programs and activities flexibly to reach diverse parent groups;
- Evaluate the effectiveness of parent involvement programs and activities on a regular basis.

Program Ideas:

Parent involvement programs should match the needs of the school and the community. One or more of the following ideas might be used as a framework upon which to build specific programs. A comprehensive family-school partnership might incorporate the following concepts, as well as others not listed here.

1. **The Home Environment** – Emphasize home conditions that support a child's achievement in school. A child's own place of study, school supplies, proper diet, sufficient sleep, and rules governing such things as recreation, TV, and homework hours are important to educational progress.
2. **School-based Services** – Schools might offer use of facilities for community education and family services. For example, a variety of parent education programs could be offered on topics such as parenting skills, literacy, constructive discipline, nutrition and child/adolescent development.
3. **Learning Activities** – Parents can initiate learning activities that are not limited to academics but that also develop good study habits, conversational skills, sportsmanship, and problem solving ability. Teachers can guide parents in the use of curriculum-coordinated parent/child activities. These suggestions may include homework, skills practice, enrichment or other activities that support and complement the curriculum and enhance children's learning in school.
4. **Parent Assistance at the School** – Parents may help schools by: volunteering to tutor students, assisting with class trips, teaching mini-courses (computers, crafts, etc.), and discussing their careers with students. Other parents may help in the classroom, lunchroom, or administrative offices. Schools and parents can collaborate on special activities and assemblies. Among many possibilities are such things as "Community Education Day," parent/child summer activities, and a "Special Person Day," where children bring to school a person who is important to them.
5. **Parents as Advocates** – As members of advisory councils or other groups, parents can participate in school improvement plans, help develop school policy, and set priorities. These groups can also inform the community about school needs/goals.
6. **Two-Way School/Parent Communication** –
   Parents should be given specific information on the academic year learning objectives and discipline codes and regular opportunities to discuss their child's progress. In addition to newsletters and conferences, some schools use recorded messages about such things as homework assignments and school activities to keep parents informed. Schools can develop partnerships with community-based organizations to reach out and bring in parents from diverse backgrounds.

Summary:

The organizations that collaborated on this brochure hope it will help schools and school districts to discuss and implement parent involvement policies. By publicizing information about existing programs, and by raising the issue among professional educators, NCPIE will encourage local school and community leaders

Handout #2

CHAPTER 1 FLEXIBILITY

A Guide to Opportunities in Local Projects

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Elementary and Secondary Education
Compensatory Education Programs

February 1992

FOREWORD

The U.S. Department of Education encourages educators and the public to learn about the flexibility that is built into federal programs. With this information, educators can tailor federally assisted services to supplement regular schooling activities and also support broader improvements in educational programs.

John T. MacDonald
Assistant Secretary for
Elementary and Secondary Education

Mary Jean LeTendre
Director
Compensatory Education Programs

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

The guide describes areas of flexibility authorized in Chapter 1 that can assist educators in implementing Chapter 1 projects. It should be used as a source of ideas. To implement this flexibility, please refer to the Chapter 1 statute, regulations, and policy manual. These documents contain additional requirements and considerations that may affect the manner in which the flexibility is implemented. Please consult the statute, regulations, and policy manual for specific guidance in each area of flexibility.

(excerpts from this guide follow...)

INVOLVING THE PARENTS OF CHAPTER 1 STUDENTS

Districts that receive Chapter 1 funds are required to involve the parents of Chapter 1 students in project-related activities. Accordingly, Chapter 1 funds may be used to conduct a wide variety of services that promote parent participation. These include activities that encourage contact between the home and the Chapter 1 project, involve parents in school activities, and develop parents' skills in assisting their children with schoolwork.

Districts attempting to increase the involvement of Chapter 1 parents in their children's schooling may use Chapter 1 funds for a variety of activities. For example, districts may use Chapter 1 funds to pay a parent of a participating student to serve as a Chapter 1 classroom aide. In addition, districts may use Chapter 1 funds to pay for parents to attend conferences that train them to conduct home-based educational activities and participate more effectively in the local Chapter 1 project. Districts may also use Chapter 1 funds to establish a Chapter 1 resource center (within or outside of school) for parents to prepare materials to use in improving their children's skills. Other activities for parental involvement in Chapter 1 include parent conferences; reporting to parents on their children's progress; hiring, training, and utilizing parental involvement liaison workers; training of personnel; the provision of Chapter 1 program information as well as responses to parent recommendations; and the solicitation of parents' suggestions in planning, developing, and operating the program.

For the facilitation of parental involvement in Chapter 1, reasonable Chapter 1 expenditures for refreshments during parent meetings and training, particularly when the sessions run through mealtime, are allowable. Other allowable Chapter 1 expenditures include the transportation cost to and from meetings when parents cannot afford it and the cost of babysitting services when necessary in order to support the parents' attendance and to enable them to more effectively participate in the program.

Innovation Projects

Innovation projects offer other forms of flexibility by enabling a district to use up to and including 5 percent of its Chapter 1 funds to:

- train Chapter 1 and non-Chapter 1 teachers and librarians to understand and address the special needs of Chapter 1 students and ways of integrating Chapter 1 activities into the regular classroom;
- encourage parental involvement through innovative approaches or the expansion of exemplary programs;
- encourage the involvement of community and private sector resources in meeting the needs of educationally disadvantaged children; and

For additional guidance on the flexibilities contained in Chapter 1, school districts should contact their respective State Departments of Education.

Handout #3

Mc Allen Texas Independent School District Policy

The Goals of the Mc Allen ISD Parent Involvement Program:

- To provide effective and positive communications between schools, home, and community.
- To promote parent and community involvement so that parents and community members become effective partners in the improvement of Mc Allen schools.
- To provide parenting education, awareness, training programs and activities that are beneficial for parents and their children.

The Objectives of the Mc Allen ISD Parent Involvement Program:

- To develop mutually beneficial partnerships between schools and community entities.
- To provide educational programs that strengthen parenting skills and help parents to provide educational assistance to their children.
- To expand linkages with social, educational, health and other human resource agencies.
- To implement special evening educational programs for parents and students.
- To meet the needs of "At-Risk" students and their parents.
- To keep parents better informed about school and community resources.
- To increase communication between teachers and parents regarding the academic performance and development of students.
- To develop parents' confidence and ability so that they may become effective leaders in school and community activities.

The District's Chapter 1 program shall be planned, designed, and implemented with meaningful consultation with parents of participating students. This consultation shall be organized, systematic, ongoing, informed, and timely in relation to decisions about the program. To this end the District shall:

1. Develop written policies, after consultation with and review by parents, to ensure parental involvement, including the District's commitment to give timely responses to recommendations by parents, and make those policies parents of participating students.

2. Convene an annual meeting, to which all parents of participating students are invited, to explain the programs and activities provided in the Chapter 1 program.

3. Provide parents with reports of their children's progress.

4. To the extent practical, conduct a parent-teacher conference with the parents of each student to discuss the student's progress, placement, and methods the parent can use to complement instruction.

5. Make Chapter 1 personnel readily accessible to parents.

6. Permit parents to observe Chapter 1 program activities.

7. If parents desire, provide opportunities for regular parent meetings to formulate parental input to the program.

8. Provide parents with timely information about the program.

9. Make parents aware of parental involvement requirements and other relevant program matters.

10. Provide reasonable support for parental involvement activities, as parents may request.

11. Coordinate, to the extent possible, parental activities.

12. To the extent practicable, provide information, programs and activities for parents in a language and form that the parents understand.

13. Through consultation with parents, annually assess the effectiveness of the parent involvement program and determine what action needs to be taken, if any, to increase parental participation.

Los Angeles Unified School District

PART II: DISTRICTWIDE PARENT-INVOLVEMENT POLICY

POLICY STATEMENT

The Los Angeles Unified School District recognizes that when schools and parents form strong partnerships, our children's potential for educational success improves significantly. Teachers and school administrators become more aware of parent and community expectations and are more responsive to suggestions on program operations. Parents learn the scope of the school's instructional program and set high expectations for their children. As a result, schools focus more sharply on student growth and success.

Schools have the responsibility to involve parents in this partnership. The Los Angeles Unified School District therefore supports a variety of parent-involvement programs that require schools to involve parents at all grade levels in a broad range of roles. These programs will be coordinated through the District's Parent Involvement Unit.

The responsibility and accountability for implementing the districtwide parent-involvement policy will be shared among board members, central and regional offices, local schools and their communities, and parents.

COMPONENTS OF THE POLICY

Six interrelated components are comprised in the policy: (1) parent participation, (2) communication, (3) parent training, (4) community resources, (5) policy guidelines and mandates, and (6) monitoring and evaluation. Below we describe each component as well as specific activities that could be included under the component. Local schools (A), region or division offices (B), or District offices (C) will have the responsibility for carrying out these activities.

1. Parent Participation

The primary objective of the parent participation component is to develop strategies to facilitate the active involvement of parents in the education of their children. Our focus will be on helping parents acquire more effective parenting practices that support school success. Activities include:

- Establish strategies for home-school partnerships. (A)
- Research and implement strategies to involve nonparticipating parents. (A)
- Develop and implement a local plan for increasing parent involvement. (A)
- Solicit feedback from parents as part of a needs assessment. (A)

April 15, 1991

- Plan Open House, Back-to-School Night, and parent conferences at local schools. (A)

2. Communication

The successful implementation of the parent-involvement policy will require effective ongoing two-way communication between parents and the following groups: schools; regional offices; administrative offices; board members; community groups and churches, with sensitivity to language and cultural needs; business groups; and public agencies. The communication component will facilitate this interaction by gathering, compiling, and distributing parent-involvement information to schools and offices. Specific activities include:

- Inform all parents of the District's parent-involvement policy on an annual basis. (A,B,C)
- Disseminate effective models of parent involvement to schools for possible adoption. (B)
- Provide parents with opportunities to get acquainted with other parents and involve community persons and school staff (e.g., cafeteria staff, custodial, clerical, educators, etc.) (A)
- Share and develop with parents the vision, mission, and implementation of the school's instructional delivery program. (A)
- Provide information regarding existing programs. (A,B)
- Establish a parent and community bulletin board at each school site. (A)
- Facilitate communication by utilizing teleconferences and other technologies. (B,C)
- Encourage the establishment of a speakers' bureau for parents. (B,C)
- Make individual school profiles available to parents and community members, including schoolwide grade-level student achievement. (A)
- Make students' individual profiles available to their parents. (A)
- Use technology to develop a centralized file system that contains language interpretations (professionally developed) of major District documents related to parent involvement and to provide a computerized list of translators. (C)
- Purchase translation kits in order to provide communication in the various languages. (B)

This Districtwide Parent Involvement Policy document also describes these other components of the Policy: Parent Training, Community Resources, Policy Mandates and Guidelines, and Monitoring and Evaluation. It also contains a short introduction on background and research.

Baltimore City Public Schools
Community Involvement Policy Statement

Rationale

In order to establish collaboration between neighborhoods and schools, the schools must develop and expand effective community involvement programs. Increase involvement in all schools by civic, business, university, church, fraternal, and parent groups will create a positive bond, a tie that will produce a stronger educational system and improve the quality of life for the citizens of Baltimore.

Policy

The Baltimore City Public Schools system supports effective, continuing community involvement at all levels in every school. Schools will encourage this involvement, providing communication and training, decision making and collaboration, in a n effort to implement the school system's goals and to realize the plans of individual schools.

The Concept of Parent/Community Involvement

The Baltimore City Public School System recognizes that parent, community, business, and higher education involvement are critical to student development and to success in learning. The promotion of partnerships can lead to improving children's welfare and to improving scholastic achievement. In addition, inter-agency collaboration and community partnerships can provide essential support for school programs through human and physical resources and funding. The school system also recognizes that other city agencies play a critical role in supporting our goals, particularly in the areas of health, social services, and employment.

Research shows that schools in all communities are capable of mobilizing parents and the ongoing support of those parents will reinforce the school's curricular goals.

The Baltimore City Public Schools seeks to provide active participation in schools of parents, students, community members, businesses, and organizations. Through collaborative efforts with all concerned citizen groups, we seek a commitment to improve school climate and student achievement.

Comprehensive programs integrate parents both directly and indirectly. Current literature identifies five parent roles:

1. Parents as partners
2. Parents as collaborators and problem solvers
3. Parents as audience
4. Parents as supporters
5. Parents as advisors and co-decision makers

Source: Beyond the Bake Sale, Anne T. Henderson, Carl L. Marburger, Theodora Ooms, National Committee for Citizens in Education.

Educational researchers divide parent involvement into five types:

1. Basic obligations of parents
2. Basic obligations of schools
3. Parent involvement at school
4. Parent involvement in learning activities at home
5. Parent involvement in...advocacy

Source: **"On Parents and Schools: A Conversation with Joyce Epstein,"** Educational Leadership, Vol. 47, 2, October 1989.

Each school is responsible for developing a plan to:

1. Increase Parent/Community Involvement
2. Increase Volunteers
3. Increase Partnerships

Staff and parent training should include the following:

- Communication Skills
- Advocacy
- Volunteerism
- Parent/Community Collaboration and Outreach
- Home Study Support
- Parent/Teacher Conferencing
- Invitational Education

Active parent and community support groups, working in close collaboration with staff and students, can improve student achievement and welfare.

Therefore, it is critical that each school create and implement an individual plan to achieve effective parent and community involvement.

Pomona (CA) Unified School District - Policy

Parent/Guardian Involvement

Parents/guardian of all children enrolled in the Pomona Unified School District shall have regular opportunities to make recommendations on the educational needs of their children and on ways in which they can help their children derive benefits from instruction.

The district shall invite all parents/guardians of eligible Chapter I children to attend at least one public meeting each year in order to discuss Chapter I programs and activities and solicit parents' input. Parents shall be informed of their right to consult in the design and implementation of Chapter I programs. The district shall assist parents in setting up a framework for networking among parents/guardians, teachers, and agency officials.

Each school site will be required to develop its own unique parent involvement program using guidelines (1 through 6) as stated below.

The Superintendent or designee shall ensure opportunities for parent/guardian involvement by means which shall include an annual evaluation of the following guidelines:

1. Helping parents develop parenting skills and foster conditions at home that support their children's efforts in learning. This may be accomplished through the development of parent training and informational brochures, workshops, etc. for parents of compensatory education students. The topics could include health and safety; school preparation for children; and building positive home conditions that support school learning and behavior.

2. Providing parents with the knowledge of techniques designed to assist their children in learning at home. Techniques to encourage include reading to children and listening to children read; encouraging study habits that include a regular time and place for homework; monitoring and assisting with homework as guided by teachers at each grade level; setting standards and limits for the use of time and social interactions of the students; conversing with children about school and other topics; and exploring curricular and career choices.

3. Providing access to and coordinating community and support services for children and families. This may include locating for parents and actively encouraging them to use community resource programs and agencies, examples of which are senior citizen tutorial programs, business/school partnerships, city/school partnerships, college work study/help programs, and library/museum programs.

4. Promoting clear two-way communication between school and family about school programs and children's progress. This happens best when both school staff and parents freely initiate and promptly respond to communication requests. Activities to encourage are frequent discussions between teachers and parents; school newsletters; back-to-school/open house activities; and weekend informational workshops/training sessions.

The Governing Board recognizes that a child's education is a responsibility shared by school and family. To support the District mission to educate all students effectively and to their highest potential, schools and parents must work as partners.

Each school in the District shall have a program of parent involvement. This program will be designed to promote frequent, clear two-way communication between the school and family regarding their child's academic achievement, social progress and school programs; to provide parents with knowledge of effective parenting skills, school and community support services, and appropriate techniques to help their children learn at home; to support parents as decision makers and to develop their leadership in governance, advisory and advocacy roles; and to involve parents, through appropriate training, in instruction and support roles at the school.

Although parents are diverse in culture, language, and needs, they overwhelmingly share the school's commitment to the educational success of their children. This success cannot be the sole responsibility of a single program such as Chapter I or School Improvement or a group of individuals. All schools must involve parents at each grade level and in a variety of roles as part of the program of parent involvement.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT POLICY STATEMENT

The Board of Education recognizes the necessity and value of parent involvement to support student success and academic achievement. In order to assure collaborative partnerships between parents and schools, the board, working through the administration, is committed to:

a. involving parents as partners in school governance including shared decision making.

b. establishing effective two-way communication with all parents, respecting the diversity and differing needs of families.

c. developing strategies and programmatic structures at schools to enable parents to participate actively in their children's education.

d. providing support and coordination for school staff and parents to implement and sustain appropriate parent involvement from kindergarten through grade twelve.

e. utilizing schools to connect students and families with community resources that provide educational enrichment and support.

Policy Questions

A. What are the goals of this policy and how clearly are they defined?

B. What steps does this policy say will be taken to achieve these goals?

C. Is there any reference to resources needed?

D. How well does this policy meet the NCPIE guidelines?
Chapter One requirements?

E. Which elements of this policy would be the most useful for
your school district?

Handout #9

IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOL BOARD POLICY

Both parents and school boards are becoming increasingly aware of the benefits of parent involvement programs. Districts are developing a variety of programs to foster relations between families and the schools.

For such programs to have any long-term effect, however, they must grow out of a school board policy that has been carefully planned, clearly communicated, and consistently evaluated. This summary chapter outlines some of the considerations for school boards as they work to enhance parent involvement in their own schools.

Step 1: Assess Current Policies and Needs

Review current policies that may affect parent involvement in your district's schools. Look at both successful and unsuccessful parent involvement programs. Why are some programs working?

Ask for parent input in this process. Work with local PTA leaders, for example, to find out what school district policies and practices hinder the participation of parents in school activities. Be sure to involve a broad range of parents.

Assess district needs. What are school district goals? The New York State School Boards Association has developed a Policy and Practice Needs Assessment instrument that may be a valuable tool in your district's assessment procedure.

Once your district goals are clearly in mind, evaluate how effectively existing programs help achieve those goals. In Miami, for example, one district goal is to raise student scores on statewide achievement tests. As a result, activities on the parent calendars are specifically designed to reinforce skills that are tested. Parents know that they have a responsibility for helping their children be successful in the tests. Consider changing demographics as part of the planning process. How will changing population trends affect existing programs? What new programs may the board need to develop?

Step 2: Establish Board Policy and the Board's Commitment to that Policy

Follow a comprehensive process in drafting, developing, and adopting board policies on parent involvement. Allow many opportunities for parent and community input. Establish clear goals; consider a variety of alternative approaches to meeting those goals. For example, if a goal is "to ensure that parents know what their children are learning," possible strategies to meet the goal might include:

— improving information on report cards
— regular letters to parents
— providing funds to support evening teacher visits to children's homes
— an increase in formal communications, such as newsletters.

In some cases, the school district itself may not be the only institution that can effectively meet the need. For example, school districts that identify "increasing teacher knowledge about the importance of parent involvement in education" as a goal may consider:

- working through the state school boards association to change certification requirements to include a course on the educational impact of parent involvement in education
- working through the state school boards association with state colleges and universities to develop preservice and inservice curricula for teachers

Define roles for parents clearly. In some areas, school boards are prohibited by policy, contractual, or legal constraints from sharing any decision-making authority. In other areas, however, parent input may serve a valuable function. Examples of policy areas in which decision-making is increasingly being shared include:

— setting guidelines for community use of schools
— discussing budget priorities
— planning and evaluating extracurricular activities
— hiring school principals
— reviewing proposed new school programs.

Ann Kahn, former school board member and president of the National PTA, has seen parent involvement in decision-making from both sides. She points out that school boards are legally obligated to *make policy*. Parents, however, can have input during policy formulation and can participate in making decisions *within that policy*.

John Goodlad's *A Study of Schooling* outlines the kind of role most parents want to play in school decision-making:

> Polls and surveys shows that [parents] would like a greater say in the affairs of their schools. But

> this does not mean that parents want to take over the schools. Some do, but most don't. Rather, they want to be kept informed in as clear a fashion as possible, especially about their children's progress and welfare. Further, they want the decisions and those who make them to be visible. They would prefer to leave the running of the school to the principal, and the classrooms to teachers and, if possible, to hold them accountable. . . . Most would increase the decision-making role of parents, parent associations, and lay advisory councils. But they would not elevate their authority above the professional individuals and groups or the board.

Of course, not *all* parents agree with Goodlad's statement. Some activist parents want to serve not only in an advisory role, but to make policy themselves. Nonetheless, the latest Gallup Poll on Education and the 1987 Metropolitan Life Survey confirm that parents want increased *involvement*, but not increased *authority*.

Support policies with budgetary resources. Successful parent involvement programs require a substantial commitment from parents. The district should be willing to assume an equal responsibility for providing resources such as staff, training, or increased communication.

Affirm the board's commitment to the new policy both within and outside the school system.

Stress the benefits of parent involvement. Let parents, teachers, and the community know the goals of any program.

Step 3: Communicate the Policy

Understand the importance of communication. "Often school boards may think they can put off giving time and attention to their communication responsibilities, especially when the school system does not face a major crisis," said Nick Goble, assistant executive director of the Pennsylvania School Boards Association. "However, major crises are often caused by a lack of communication."

Start by communicating the policy. . .and the board's commitment to it. . .to all school staff members. Previous chapters have shown that school administrators and teachers can be one of the greatest strengths of a parent involvement program—or one of its biggest obstacles. If inservice training is needed, provide financial support.

Use a variety of communication methods to let parents know about the new policy. Radio and television announcements, speeches to community organizations, flyers sent home from school, and even notices inserted in grocery bags are all possibilities.

Step 4: Develop a Plan to Implement the Policy

Assign specific responsibilities for implementing the program. Will a board committee be needed? How will local PTAs be involved? If additional staff or budget are needed, establish a plan for making them available.

Obtain materials from other parent involvement programs. If elements from an existing program can be adapted to your district's needs, the process of implementation will be faster and easier.

Establish priorities. In the beginning, for example, it may be helpful to ask parents to work on resolving immediate school problems, rather than long-standing issues. As parents experience success, they will be better able to examine longer-range concerns.

Step 5: Evaluate the Policy

Build in an evaluation component to any parent involvement program. The evaluation should be designed to determine how successful the program is in reaching its stated goals. Evaluation components might include:

- — short questionnaires to all parents
- — in-depth questionnaires to a sample of parents
- — interviews with parents
- — examination of achievement data
- — reports from teachers and principals

Plan to review the policy at regular intervals. A task force of parents might be authorized to review the policy during its first year of implementation, for example.

Revise policy and programs regularly in light of evaluations. ■

Excerpt from First Teachers: Parental Involvement in the Public Schools.
Alexandria, VA: National School Boards Association. Nov. 1988.
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THE COMER PROCESS IN PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MARYLAND
(Home School Communications - A Matter of Trust & Respect)

Jan Stocklinski
Comer Process Supervisor

Virginia Walker
Parent, Prince George's County

BACKGROUND

The School Development Program, better known as the Comer Process was developed by James P. Comer, a child psychiatrist and Associate Dean of the Yale Medical School. Briefly, it is a research based school improvement process that involves skills and energy of the entire school community working together to achieve the goals outlined in a school's Improvement Plan.

Key to the process and successful outcomes for our students is the building of relationships (respecting one another) among all stakeholders in a school community. It is a tough challenge to pull adults together who may be different in background (economically, racially, culturally), in attitudes, and in values, to decide what is important to them about their school - what is already good about their schools, and what they want to happen in their schools.

In 1985, the Prince George's County Public School System (a suburb of Washington, D.C. - approximately 105,000 students with approximately 65% African American students) adopted this Comer Process as one of the resources given to Milliken II Schools, predominantly one race (Black) schools that were part of our desegregation court order. Since that time, the number of schools using the Process has grown to almost 50 (35 elementary, 13 middle, and 2 high schools).

THE PROCESS

The Comer Process (School Development Program) establishes three vehicles - School Planning and Management Team, Parent Teacher Association, and a Mental Health Team which we renamed Student Staff Services Team.

Because this case study focuses on home school communication and home learning, we will focus on the School Planning and Management Team - the group that oversees the development of the School Improvement Plan (activities, etc.). It also acts as a problem-solving group when global issues are brought to the table. The team consists of parents, teachers, principal, counselor, a representative from the support staff (custodian, cafeteria staff or secretarial staff) and students at the secondary level. Parents must represent all aspects of the community and must reflect the racial/ethnic and geographic aspects of the school. All members of the team must receive training in team building, problem solving and consensus.

The staff and parnt members must share with their "constituencies" what happens at the meetings and get input back to the group they represent. They must also be trained in reaching out and pulling others (parents/staff) into the process so that many members (staff/parents) feel responsible for the outcomes - both outcomes of school activities, outcomes related to student achievement and outcomes related to the healthy development of all children in a school.

BARRIERS TO PARENT INVOLVEMENT AND HOW TO OVERCOME THEM

School teams must recognize barriers to parent involvement and then work to remove them. One of the greatest barriers is one of "attitudes." We hear teachers make comments like "you know how those parents are" - "you know where they live" - etc. Comer Process starts with a "no fault" approach. We don't blame - rather, we surface problems and solve them.

School staffs need training in:

a. greeting and meeting parents and creating an inviting and non-threatening climate

b. in reaching out and not sitting together as the "school choir" at PTA's

c. in calling parents and using positively phrased language

d. in learning and understanding cultural/racial/ ethnic groups different from themselves and even sometimes their own groups

e. in how to use volunteers effectively once they have them

f. in understanding why it is painful for some families to get involved (prior negative experiences - intimidation with our school language)

g. in seeking parent representatives to initially sit on the SPMT. (One way is to have the principal or teacher call individuals and asking them to serve the first year.)

h. in planning activities that do not stress out parents and teachers with too many evening meetings.

WHERE DO WE BEGIN?

We use the School Planning and Management Team as a brainstorming group - as a group that develops and oversees the coordination of the School Improvement Plan and as a group that develops a social/academic calendar that helps bring organization to the school community.

Here are some concrete examples of what happened at some schools in Prince George's County. At one elementary, one of the first concerns was establishing an inviting climate. It was decided that everyone would work first with the students to establish a sense of pride in their school and each time a parent meeting or workshop was held, every teacher spent time with their students mentally involving them and encouraging them to bring their parents. A motto soon developed "Parents - bring your kids" - "Kids - bring your parents."

HOME LEARNING IDEAS - Workshops were developed based on the academic and social needs developed in the school development plan.

1. Reading Workshop for Parents

Ideas were given to parents by example and in booklet form to improve reading skills at home. The child reads recipe or package directions while parent is cooking in the evening.

2. Math Workshop for Students

Math teacher gives overview of skills by grade level and gives ideas on activities using household items, and games to play. Example: measure your sister, how many cups of water can you get in this bowl.

3. Science Fair Workshop

What is involved in the scientific method. Handouts given of resources available to parents and how parents can support their children at home as the child develops and plans their Science Fair Project.

4. Test-Taking Skills Workshop

Explanation of the test is given and tips for relaxing so you don't freeze up. Examples of the answer sheets and what kind of questions to expect.

5. How to Get Out of the House in the Morning - Building Self Reliance

This was a parent workshop to give tips for parents who may or may not work. Put keys and book bags by the front door, set table for breakfast, pick out clothes, etc. All this is done the night before with the child.

6. Understanding Child Growth and Development

How parents can best work with their children at home at different ages and stages.

7. Unplug the T.V. - A School-Wide Approach

A contract is drawn up. The T.V. is unplugged for a week, month, etc. Other activities are planned and summary is discussed afterwards at a PTA meeting, or at a spaghetti dinner, etc.

8. Multicultural Education and Your Child

Creating a bias-free environment at home.

9. Adolescence Workshop

This workshop deals with body changes, stress that may be experienced by the adolescent and ways to deal with it.

10. Learning Styles Workshop

This workshop helps parents know more about the best way their particular child learns and how they can reinforce this at home. Either the PTA, SPMT or sub-committee worked to determine whether the workshop would be a general one or one developed for specific grade levels. Publicity went home by way of announcements; letters written by students to their parents; telephne calls; students so excited about the activity that they "brought" their parents out; and incentive programs with some healthy classroom competition. Often parents and staff present workshops together and this also made parents feel more comfortable attending.

A COUNTY PERSPECTIVE

We also established a county-wide Steering Committee of "grass roots" people - a staff member and parent from each of forty-six schools meet four times a year to share successes, problem solve and plan an annual Retreat. The Retreat offers skills training and sharing opportunities to the School Planning and Management Teams (School-Based Management Teams) once a year.

At the county level, several forms and documents were developed for parents by our Guidance Department*.

1. Elementary Home/School File for Educational/ Personal Documents. This folder gives parents a focus for school involvement in a particular grade level as well as gives ideas of learning activities parents can do regularly at home to support the school program.
2. It's Your Right! It's Your Responsibility! (Used with all families.)
3. Parents' Guide to College Admissions Testing

*Prince George's County Public Schools
Sasscer Administration Building
14201 School Lane
Upper Marlboro, Maryland 20772
Mrs. Patricia Martin, Guidance Supervisor

Handout #11

SAN DIEGO CITY SCHOOLS
Community Relations and Integration Services Division
Parent Involvement Integrated Service Area

Report on Efforts to Build Home-School Partnerships and Announcement of Parent Involvement Incentive Grant Awards for 1991-92
June 4, 1991

Issue/Concern

The Parent Involvement Task Force, a broad-based group of parents, community representatives and district staff (Attachment B), has developed a comprehensive policy for parent involvement (Attachment A).

The Task Force requests that district staff periodically update the school board regarding district efforts to encourage home-school partnerships.

Background

All parent involvement programs at school and district level are to follow a general framework that includes a vision statement and three supportive components:

1. Building staff capacity to work effectively with parents;
2. Partnership development to plan and implement comprehensive parent involvement programs at schools; and
3. Follow-up and support to sustain ongoing parent involvement.

Responsibility for the implementation of this policy has been assigned to the district's Parent Involvement Department.

Discussion

The Parent Involvement Department was established to provide coordination for district level efforts in parent involvement and to provide technical assistance to schools as they develop site parent involvement programs.

Update of District Efforts to Support the Parent Involvement Policy

The Parent Involvement Department has provided substantial assistance to schools to support the three components that serve as a framework for implementing the parent involvement policy.

I. Building Staff Capacity to work effectively with parents.

Joyce Epstein's research on teachers' practices to promote parent involvement indicates that when teachers take deliberate actions to involve parents (i.e., giving parents clear, useful information about how to help their children at home), then socioeconomic status and education level of parents disappear as factors in the willingness of parents to be involved. However, when teachers don't actively work to involve parents, those factors become important indicators for who becomes and stays involved; typically, that means mainstream parents with higher levels of education and social class. It is important for parents of all students to provide support for their children's education.

A number of training opportunities and resources were available for staff to build their competence and confidence to work effectively with all parents.

- Parent Involvement Department staff provided:
  - technical assistance (materials, planning/evaluation assistance or other resources) to 83 schools; and
  - training sessions for 13 schools on parent involvement program planning, home-school communication, parent-teacher conferencing or planning and conducting home visits to parents.
- *The Vital Connection*, a quarterly newsletter designed to build staff awareness about the importance of parent involvement and give practical ideas to build home-school partnerships, was distributed to schools.
- *The Parent Involvement Handbook for Principals and Staff*, developed in 1990, was reprinted and presented to all new administrators (65 copies have been sold to other school districts nationally and the handbook is now listed in ERIC).
- The Parent Involvement Department staff did training sessions for new principals, for vice principal leadership candidates through the Leadership Development Program and new bilingual teachers.
- *Parents On Your Side* workshops were made available for teachers, counselors and principals. The workshop is designed to enable staff to improve communication with parents and enlist their support for homework completion and improved student behavior. Workshops were presented at seven elementary and seven secondary schools for 685 staff members.

II. Partnership Development to plan and implement comprehensive parent involvement programs at schools.

The most successful parent involvement efforts at schools are comprehensive (responding to a variety of needs), systematically planned and long-lasting. Some of the efforts to assist the development of home-school partnerships are listed below.

- In October, 1990 the third annual county wide parent involvement conference *Home-School-Community: Team Building For Student Success* was held at Crawford High School. Attendance has increased from 300 parents and staff attending in 1988 to 700 in 1989 to 1000 in 1990. Workshop sessions were presented in English, Spanish, Lao, Cambodian and Vietnamese.
- The Parent Involvement Department staff provided assistance to organizers of the African Family Conference (December, 1990) and the Latino Family Conference (April, 1991).
- Parents and staff were provided with opportunities for training to implement two site-based programs, *Family Reading* (12 trainings) to support the district's new language arts program and *Parents Growing Together* (15 trainings) to help parents understand child development and improve parenting skills.
- The Institute for Responsive Education in Boston has selected six schools (Horton, Sherman, Torrey Pines, Valencia Park, Pacific Beach Middle School and Memorial Academy) to be part of its national Schools reaching Out project.
- Twenty-three schools were awarded Parent Involvement Incentive Grants for 1990-91 to work with community based organizations or to develop innovative projects to strengthen home-school partnerships.
- Implementation of a new pilot project designed to build on successful parent education and outreach strategies used by Vahac Mardirosian's Parent Institute for Quality Education is now underway at Emerson School.
- Culturally sensitive home learning materials developed for pre-K through first grades have been piloted in English and Spanish. The materials are currently being translated into four Southeast Asian languages. Materials are now being developed for second and third grades. Activities involve parents and children in doing problem solving, math and reading together.

III. Follow-up and Support to facilitate the participation and support of parents.

In order to assist schools to establish and sustain parent involvement, commitments must be made at site and district levels to provide necessary resources, guidance and accountability for efforts. In the past year this component has been supported through efforts such as:

- The Parent Involvement Task Force has continued to meet regularly and play a very active role as an advisory group for policy implementation issues.
- An ongoing effort is being made to link school site and district parent involvement activities to community resources. While maintaining mutual respect for autonomy, efforts are being made by parent involvement staff to build working relationships with community groups as well as with PTA leadership, individual parent activists and the superintendent's ethnic advisory committees.
- A special effort is also being made to link district parent involvement efforts to resources and information available at state and national levels.
- Parent Involvement has been established as a component of the overall school site plan for each school.
- Several important changes will soon have a positive impact on the Follow-up and Support component as a direct result of central office restructuring:
    - First, the new Parent Involvement and Support Department will assume responsibility for School Improvement Programs and Chapter 1 parent involvement components.
    - Second, a bus formerly owned by the Mentor Teacher Program has been purchased and will be staffed for use as a mobile Parent Resource Center for schools.
    - Third, developing standards for parent involvement and mutual accountability for schools and for the new CRISD Integrated Service Areas and School Support Teams.

Parent Involvement Incentive Grant Awards

The purpose of the grants is to support the parent involvement policy by encouraging schools to develop promising practices and innovative programs that strengthen partnerships between home and school.

Schools that received Parent Involvement Incentive Grants for the current school year (Attachment C) are scheduled to receive certificates of recognition at the June 4 Board of Education meeting.

Schools selected to receive 1991-92 Parent Involvement Incentive Grants are listed in Attachment C.

Summary

San Diego City Schools has a commitment to approach the complex issue of parent involvement in a comprehensive and systematic way. The district's parent involvement policy can be implemented through thoughtful planning and collaborative action to provide necessary resources for schools, evaluation of efforts and mutual accountability for results. By establishing a solid foundation and cohesive approach for parent involvement efforts, it will be possible to:

- assist staff to work effectively with parents to help them to support their children's learning; and
- strengthen programs at schools that can significantly enhance outcomes for students.

Parent Involvement Grant Awards 1991-92

Parent Involvement Incentive Grants have been awarded to district schools for the 1991-92 school year. The grants were selected by the Parent Involvement Task Force. The grants ranged from $2,000 to $10,000. Schools applied for innovative grants to implement programs that go beyond traditional parent involvement activities. CONGRATULATIONS to the following schools:

Elementary:

School	Program Focus	Award
Adams	Develop and offer early orientation (and registration) for incoming kindergarten students. Provide bridging classes for students and parents in order to ensure a smooth beginning of school and train a large cadre of parents with skills to help their children become successful in school.	$6,000
Euclid	Develop a Family Literacy Program in several languages, provide a Self-Esteem Program for parents and students, utilize cultural diversity of families to support student learning, establish a Parent Book Corner and collect home learning materials in different languages for parent check-out.	$6,000
Field	Offer a homework clinic known as the Field Bureau of Information (FBI) manned by parents and community members and establish a voice mail hotline to inform those parents who cannot actively participate in school activities of homework assignments, messages from the principals and teachers and helpful hints from the support staff.	$10,000
Hickman	Develop site-based research teams to discover ways of motivating parents to actively participate in their children's education. Establish a parent communication and environmental awareness center.	$5,000
Perry*	Develop a room-parent network to coordinate parent involvement activities, continuation of a tutoring program and provide staff-developed learning materials (k-6) for parents to use at home with their children.	$7,000
Valencia Park	Develop strategies to recruit and motivate parents to actively participate in their children's education through specific parent skill building such as ESL, parenting skills, and Family Math, Family Reading, and field trips to enhance cultural/community awareness.	$4,000
Spreckels	Offer the Family Reading Program, a series of workshops in which parents are instructed in ways to read and discuss children's literature and implement the Family Kindergarten Program, a series of trainings to encourage parents to help their children in reading readiness, math, homework and study skills.	$2,000
Whitman	Initiate a Parent/Community Member Shadow Day, offer staff and parent leadership training, purchase computers for a home lending program, and provide staff developed resource guides for strengthening home-school partnerships.	$5,000

Handout #12

Parents in Touch

District Leadership for Parent Involvement

Ms. Warner describes some strategies used in Indianapolis to facilitate the kind of two-way communication that enables parents to stay in touch and to become partners with the schools in the education of their children.

BY IZONA WARNER

PARENT INVOLVEMENT is not a new idea in the Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS). In 1978 the district submitted a proposal to the Lilly Endowment, requesting a three-year grant to enhance the level of parent involvement in students' education. That proposal grew out of a growing awareness of successful practices around the country, a review of the literature, and a formal needs assessment within the school district that had brought to light parents' wish that the schools would keep them better informed.[1] We proposed developing a multifaceted, systemwide parent involvement program.

The result was the establishment of Parents in Touch, which continues to this day as the umbrella program for parent involvement in the IPS. Its name clearly states its goal: to facilitate the kind of two-way communication that enables parents to stay in touch and to become partners with the schools in the education of their children.

IZONA WARNER is the director of Parents in Touch, Indianapolis.

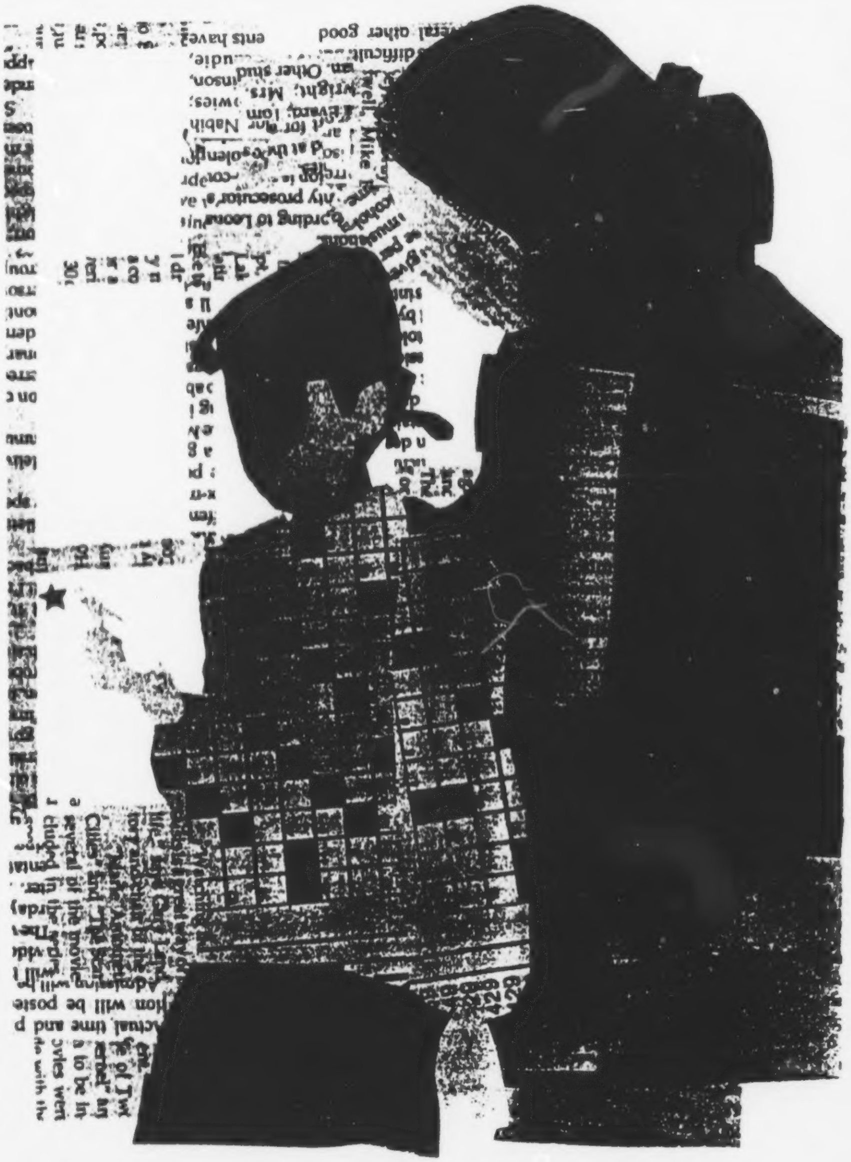

Illustration by Kris Hackleman

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Why should parents enter into such partnerships with schools? As the first teachers of their children, parents have the primary responsibility for children's learning. Children's ideas and attitudes about the importance of education and learning begin with the expectations and beliefs of their parents. Therefore, parents have a crucial role in both the function and the reform of schooling. Teachers and administrators have an obligation to help parents carry out their natural roles as models for and helpers of their own children. Working together, schools and families can improve student achievement, attendance, and behavior.

In order to reach and involve all parents, Parents in Touch uses a variety of approaches. Several of the district's strategies are described below.

PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES

Parent/teacher conferences are a major emphasis of the Parents in Touch program. Conferences for grades K-12 are held at the end of the first six-week grading period. Adjusted hours are arranged through agreement between the administration and the Indianapolis Education Association so that working parents can be accommodated. In each school, a coordinator is designated to schedule conferences. The goal is to meet with all students' families early in the school year to establish communication.

At the conferences, report cards are distributed, and parents and teachers share information about students. They assess progress and may set goals for increasing students' achievement. The conferences are also an opportunity for teachers to distribute materials developed by Parents in Touch to help parents understand and support their children and the schools.

At the elementary level (K-6), the Parents in Touch materials include activity calendars, student/teacher/parent (STP) contracts, and STP folders.

- Activity calendars are prepared for parents of students in kindergarten through grade 3. The calendars include curriculum-related suggestions for daily activities with children. They also provide information about holiday schedules, test dates, report card schedules, and a variety of community and school resources. Spelling assignments for the entire school year are included, so that youngsters and families can practice them. If parents cannot attend the conferences, their children are given the calendars to take home. At the elementary level, about 83% of the students' families attended conferences during the 1988-89 school year.

PARENTS IN TOUCH VIEWS CONFERENCES AT ALL LEVELS OF SCHOOLING AS VEHICLES FOR TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION ON MATTERS RELATED TO STUDENT SUCCESS.

- STP contracts are offered to parents by schools that choose to use them. These contracts – prepared in triplicate and signed by parents, teachers, and students – are agreements to fulfill certain commitments. By signing, the parent agrees, among other things, to see that the child attends school regularly, to establish a regular time for homework, and to provide a place for study. The student agrees to come to school prepared to learn, to complete and return homework on time, and to observe regular study hours. The teacher agrees to advise parents of their child's progress and to provide activities that make learning meaningful and enjoyable. Although principals are not parties to the contracts, they commit themselves to endorsing parent involvement and to ensuring that the building climate encourages learning. Twenty thousand contracts were distributed by schools that participated in this program during the 1989-90 school year.
- STP folders go home weekly and then are returned to school. The folders contain students' completed assignments and information that will help parents monitor homework. They also provide a place for parents and teachers to write notes to one another.

The materials provided by Parents in Touch to foster parent involvement at the junior high school level (grades 7-8) include folders, STP contracts, and a weekly calendar.

- Folders containing school policies on homework and attendance, on grading procedures, and on dates for distributing report cards are given to all parents at the first parent/teacher conference or are sent home with students whose parents cannot attend. Overviews of the magnet school programs available at the high school level are also included for parents' consideration.
- STP contracts are prepared in triplicate and discussed with middle-grade parents during the conferences. These contracts are similar to the elementary STP contracts but are tailored to the needs of middle-schoolers; for example, they include information to help parents improve their interactions with early adolescents.
- All junior high schools provide weekly calendars on which students can list their daily assignments in each class. The calendars enable parents to monitor their children's homework.

At the high school level, the materials provided by Parents in Touch include a folder and a course record.

- Folders, distributed at the first parent/teacher conference, give parents general information about graduation requirements, courses, class rankings and standings, the attendance policy, and the faculty advisory program.
- A course record for each student is enclosed in his or her folder. This record lists all courses taken and the grades the student received. Parents can assess a child's status by comparing the course record with the requirements for graduation.

In addition to providing these materials, some high schools hold meetings to give parents information that deals with college financial aid programs.

In short, Parents in Touch views conferences at all levels of schooling as vehicles for two-way communication on matters that are important for student success. The conferences are designed to allow parents and teachers to begin a productive relationship that will grow throughout the school year.

DIAL-A-TEACHER

The Dial-a-Teacher program is designed to give students and parents assistance with and information about homework. Located in a library/media center, Dial-a-Teacher operates Monday through Thursday (except on holidays) between the hours of 5 p.m. and 8 p.m.

Dial-a-Teacher is staffed by two teams of teacher specialists, paid by funds from Chapter 2. Each five-member team is composed of specialists in math, social studies, science, language arts, and elementary education.

The teacher specialists act as an extension of the classroom, helping students who need extra assistance and who might not complete their homework without it. They also answer questions from parents about their children's homework. The teachers lead students to the right answers, rather than merely give them the solutions.

HOMEWORK HOTLINE

"Homework Hotline" is a live call-in television program, produced by the IPS Center for Instructional Television and aired every Tuesday from 5 to 6 p.m. Two paid teacher specialists assist callers with mathematics problems for grades 1-6. Students and parents can talk with the television teachers and simultaneously see the problems worked on the chalkboard. American Cablevision, with approximately 67,000 subscribers, and Comcast Cablevision, with approximately 81,000 subscribers, carry the program on their public television channels.

PARENT LINE/COMMUNICATOR

The Parent Line/Communicator is a computerized telephone system that gives callers access to about 140 three- to four-minute tape-recorded messages on a variety of school-related topics. Each tape also refers callers to sources of additional information. Sample topics include school policies, option programs, magnet schools, parenting skills, adult education programs, and home/school cooperation. Reflecting its sponsorship by the Institute for Drug and Alcohol Abuse, the series also offers more than 50 messages on those topics. The line is in operation 24 hours a day for persons with touch-tone phones; those with rotary phones can use the system during office hours, when a clerk can transfer their calls to the requested tape title or code number. As many as 3,000 calls have been logged in a single month.

PARENT EDUCATION SEMINARS ARE OFFERED AT WORK SITES IN THE INDIANAPOLIS COMMUNITY TO SERVE PARENTS WHO CANNOT COME TO THE SCHOOLS.

THE PARENT FOCUS SERIES

The Parent Focus Series is a parent education program offering 90 special workshops that schools may request from Parents in Touch. Some workshops run as a series of five or six 90-minute sessions. Others meet only once. The workshops include discussions, lectures, and videos on such topics as early adolescent development, building children's self-esteem, teaching responsibility, and helping with homework.

Workshops are offered during both daytime and evening hours, and child care is sometimes provided. The workshops are not formal support groups, but some sessions end up serving that function. Interaction among participants is encouraged.

As part of the Parent Focus outreach effort, Parents in Touch invites public servants and people affiliated with community agencies to share their expertise with parents attending the workshops. Presenters have come from the Family Services Association, the Salvation Army, the prosecutor's office, the juvenile court, Alcoholics Anonymous, and other organizations and agencies.

WORK-SITE SEMINARS

Parent education seminars are offered at work sites in the Indianapolis community to serve parents who cannot come to workshops that are held in the school buildings. The seminars, held during lunch hours, help parents who are employed to balance work and family responsibilities. Partnerships that link home, school, and work site can make a difference in the academic success of many students, can reduce parents' anxiety about child-rearing problems, can promote a supportive atmosphere among employees, and can increase organizational loyalty. Employees bring a brown-bag lunch, or the employers provide lunch. These monthly seminars are co-sponsored by the Education Council of the Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce and by local businesses. The seminar topics, taken from those covered in the Parent Focus Series, are chosen after the employees have been surveyed about their interests and needs.

TIPS

One method for teachers to increase parents' involvement in their children's learning and development is a process called Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork (TIPS), developed by Joyce Epstein at Johns Hopkins University. The TIPS process structures homework assignments so that they include communications from school to home and from home to school and so that parents and children talk together at home about schoolwork. Parents in Touch obtained a grant from the state department of education to fund a summer program in which IPS teachers developed math and science homework assignments for grades 2, 3, 4, and 5. The short, easy-to-distribute activities are coordinated with the curriculum of each subject to focus on specific skills at each grade level. TIPS builds students' skills, informs parents about schoolwork, expands the amount of supervised learning time, and increases parents' appreciation of teachers and their support for the schools.

SUPERINTENDENT'S PARENT ADVISORY COUNCIL

The staffs of Parents in Touch and of the IPS Office of School and Community Relations provide administrative support for the superintendent's advisory council, which includes parent representatives. The council has developed a mission statement regarding the family/school partnership and is designing a structure that will support the statement. A proposal to put the council's ideas into practice will be presented to the board of school commissioners and should become part of district policy.

MEETING CHAPTER 1 MANDATES

The Parents in Touch staff is responsible for helping the district meet Chapter 1 mandates for parent involvement. Several strategies are used.

- The staff plans and conducts curriculum-related workshops to give parents suggestions for activities that they can use to reinforce their children's reading and math skills.
- The staff works with the districtwide Chapter 1 Parent Advisory Council (PAC) and helps it implement activities.
- The staff organizes, conducts, or facilitates parent education workshops, volunteer activities, and leadership training.
- Conferences between parents and Chapter 1 staff members are coordinated to coincide with the first parent/teacher conferences of the school year at each building.
- The Be Excited About Reading (BEAR) project began in the fall of 1990. Parents of children in grades K-6 are asked to promote and encourage reading for pleasure. Read-along tape recordings are provided for parents who do not read well themselves. Parents and students who read two or more books per month receive an award.
- Parents are given "deposit slips" for investing in their children's future by participating in such Chapter 1 activities as workshops, training sessions, and PAC meetings. Each event attended earns one slip, and, if four slips are accumulated within one semester, they are redeemable for a premium.

A COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAM OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT

According to Epstein, a successful effort to involve parents in their children's education requires five basic ingredients.[2] Comprehensive programs of parent involvement should include all five elements, and the Indianapolis program operationalizes Epstein's model by means of the the strategies described above.

Developing parenting skills is the goal of the first component of Epstein's model. Parents are first and foremost supporters of their children; they provide food, clothing, shelter, and psychological support for their children as they grow up. Parents in Touch helps parents fulfill their parenting roles by providing information and ideas about the characteristics of and suggesting strategies for the development of a home environment that supports the learning behaviors of children at each grade level.

The second component of Epstein's model and of the IPS parent involvement effort is communication. The staff works hard to design effective forms of communication that will reach all parents.

The third component of the parent involvement model is the use of parent volunteers. IPS encourages parents to work as volunteers at the school or to attend and support events and meetings.

The fourth component of Epstein's model is encouraging children's learning activities at home. Parents in Touch provides ideas, materials, and training to parents through its own programs and through TIPS homework activities.

The final component of the parent involvement model is encouraging parental participation in decision making across the district. The Parents in Touch staff supports this effort by recruiting parents and by helping to develop parent leadership.

IPS believes it can better meet the academic and developmental needs of its students if substantive collaboration between parents, teachers, and administrators is increased. Parent involvement is viewed as an important component of the district's school improvement plan. If all children can learn, then all parents can help to make that happen.

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[1] The needs assessment was conducted by Ned S. Hubbell and Associates in 1975.

[2] Joyce L. Epstein, "What Principals Should Know About Parent Involvement," *Principal*, vol. 66, 1987, pp. 6-9; and Ron Brandt, "On Improving School and Family Connections: A Conversation with Joyce Epstein," *Educational Leadership*, October 1989, pp. 24-27.

"At least they're educated guesses. I ought to get some credit for that!"

Case Study Questions

1. How was strategy implemented?

2. What appear to be the potential benefits and costs of the strategy?

3. What evidence of effect or positive impact is provided?

4. To what extent does the strategy seem to be transportable?

Handout #14

CHECKLIST OF YOUR DISTRICT'S POLICIES ON PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Does your district have a written policy on:	YES	NO	?
1. Parent involvement in volunteer activities	___	___	___
2. Parent involvement in home learning	___	___	___
3. Parent involvement in homework	___	___	___
4. Parent involvement in fund-raising	___	___	___
5. Parent-teacher conferences	___	___	___
6. Student progress reports to parents	___	___	___
7. Parent-school communications	___	___	___
8. Parent involvement in decision making	___	___	___

NEXT STEPS IN DISTRICT PLANNING FOR HOME-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS

Handout #15

1. The policy areas that I would like to investigate are:
   (After group discussion, underline areas selected to investigate together)

2. People we should discuss the underlined policy areas with:

   a. In the school system:

   b. In the community.

   c. Resource people beyond the community:

3. The materials (literature, copies of policies, descriptions of programs) to consult are:

4. After getting the information in 2 and 3, our next steps would be:

Name: ______________________________ Date:__________ Phone:________________

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Name: ______________________________ Date:__________ Phone:__________________

Annotated Summaries from Research and Practice Literature

Becher, R. (1984). ***Parent involvement: A review of research and principles of successful practice.*** **Washington, DC: National Institute of Education.**

This is an extensive review of the literature on parent involvement in education, particularly at the early childhood level. The author considers four major areas: the role of parents and families in determining children's intelligence, competence, and achievement; the effects of parent education programs of student achievement and the characteristics of effective programs; the benefits of parent involvement for schools and educators; and the principles of effective programs for parent involvement.

Cale, L. (1990). ***Planning for parent involvement: A handbook for administrators, teachers, and parents.*** **Phoenix, AZ: author.**

This is an excellent collection of ideas and materials that school administrators, teachers, and parents can use when planning for parent involvement. Some of the major topics covered include: benefits of parent involvement; how do parents want to be involved; the changing American family; changing American demographics; identifying obstacles, finding opportunities; principles of effective family-school partnership; suggestions for successful parental involvement in education; types of parent involvement; and steps to developing a parent involvement program. Also included are questionnaires, checklists, ideas, recent legislation, resources, and references.

Chavkin, N. F. & Williams, D. L., Jr. (1987). Enhancing parent involvement: Guidelines for access to an important resource for school administrators. ***Education and Urban Society, 19,*** **164-184.**

This articles reports on a survey of parents and school administrators regarding their attitudes, current practices, and policies on parent involvement in the education of elementary-age children. More than 2500 superintendents, 2400 school board presidents, and 4200 parents in the southwestern region of the U.S. participated in the survey.

The findings reveal that parents and administrators strongly agree that teachers should provide parents with ideas about helping children with school work at home, that principals should provide teachers with suggestions for working with parents, that teachers consider working with parents as part of the job. Parents and administrators believed that school districts should provide: (1) guidelines to help teachers and principals involve parents in the schools; (2) training for teachers on how to work with parents; and (3) training for parents on how to be involved in their child's learning. Administrators say the three most important roles for parents are audience, home tutor, and school program supporter.

In spite of parents' and educators' desire for more school policies about parent involvement, few districts reported any written policies. The most common type of written policy was on the rights of parents to participate in placement decisions regarding their own children.

Based on the results of the survey, the authors suggest that school district policies encouraging parent involvement need to be formalized. The existence of formal, written polices was directly related to increased parent involvement. In addition, school districts need to provide staff, space, and monetary resources for the implementation of effective parent involvement efforts. The provision of resources helps emphasize the importance of parent involvement in education and demonstrates a commitment to its success.

Chrispeels, J. (1991). District leadership in parent involvement: Policies and actions in San Diego. *Phi Delta Kappan, 72*, 367-371.

New state and district policy initiatives in California recognize that parent involvement is multifaceted and takes active support. Both California and local districts have adopted policies that provide a clear definition of parent involvement in education. The coordination of state, district, and individual school efforts is leading the way to improved educational achievement for all students.

Recognizing the limits of policies that are not coupled with support, school districts in California are working through the problems of implementing and maintaining policies. The new policy initiatives, however, do offer hope and are a major step forward for parent involvement in education.

Chrispeels, J. (1988). *Home-school partnership planner.* San Diego, CA: San Diego County Office of Education.

This planner is designed for principals, teachers, and parents who wish to strengthen their school's home-school partnership. The planner begins with a brief overview of the terminology used in partnership planning and then provides step-by-step instructions for developing a home-school partnership plan. The planner includes: a communications checklist; an archival data form; a blank home-school partnership planning calendar; and a sample completed home-school partnership planning calendar.
The planner also includes assessment questions, a vision statement, and an action plan.

Clark, R. M. (1989). The role of parents in ensuring education success in school restructuring efforts. Washington, DC: Council of Chief State School Officers.

Reginald Clark offers suggestions on the role of parents in ensuring education success by first examining how successful and non-successful students spend their time. He reports that over 180 school days successful students spend more than 630 hours in literacy activities while non-achieving students only spend about 270 hours.

Clark discusses the home and community curriculum that is necessary for school success. He examines the role of state education agencies in encouraging and supporting districts in four key areas: planning and implementing effective education programs; soliciting and maintaining parent involvement and community support; helping parents acquire parenting ideas and leadership strategies for helping their children achieve literacy skills; helping districts to directly help students become effectively connected to community-based programs. Clark includes the California policy and specific steps for helping schools develop a written school plan for comprehensive parent involvement activities.

Comer, J. (1988). Educating poor minority children. ***Scientific American, 259,*** **42-48.**

In this article James Comer reviews the work of the Yale Child Study Center with the New Haven school system from 1968 through 1980. Comer stresses the importance of the underlying developmental and social issues and the necessity of involving parents and the community in children's education. The success that was achieved in New Haven is being replicated in the Prince Georges County, Maryland and the Benton Harbor, Michigan schools. Comer's work clearly proves that parent involvement can be successful in all schools, even those with a predominantly low-income population.

Council of Chief State School Officers. (1991). ***Families in school: State strategies and policies to improve family involvement in education.*** **Washington, DC: author.**

This document presents both the research and practice perspective from the literature and the experience perspective of four states who have used diverse approaches and strategies for implementing family involvement in education policies and practices. The four states studied are Alabama, California, Florida, and Minnesota.

The report begins by discussing the lack of leadership at the state level for support of family involvement in education activities. The purpose of this report is to understand more about the policy goals of family involvement in the selected states, what the strategies in each state are, and whether a coordinated state vision of family involvement is developing.

Each of the four case studies presents useful background information on the development and current status of the family involvement initiative. Each case study contains descriptions of successful family involvement activities. The Appendix contains literature references and information on state contacts.

Davies, D. (1987). Parent involvement in the public schools: Opportunities for administrators. ***Education and Urban Society, 19,*** **147-163.**

Davies makes a convincing argument about the essential role of policy in parent involvement in education. He begins by discussing four topics: coproduction or partnership; decision making; citizen advocacy; and parent choice. He follows with specific recommendations for action for parents, policymakers, and practitioners.

His discussion of whether there should be policy mandates or not about parent involvement is of particular importance to Workshop #4. Based on his research at the Institute for Responsive Education, he reports that policies work best when they are specific and prescriptive, when there is periodic evaluation of the policy, and when the policy is supported through money, technical assistance, and staff time.

Davies, D. (1991). Schools reaching out: Family, school, and community partnerships for student success. *Phi Delta Kappan, 72*, 376-382.

The author describes a national project Schools Reaching Out and the three common themes in all the schools--providing success for all children, serving the whole child, and sharing responsibility. The schools are putting together new definitions of parent involvement that go beyond parent involvement to involving family and community agencies in education. Together the schools are searching for practices that work.

Davies describes three ideas that were successful in the demonstration schools: (1) the parent center; (2) home visitors; and (3) action research teams of teachers. The parent center (staffed by paid coordinators and volunteers) offered ESL and GED classes, organized grade-level breakfasts with teachers and parents, served as an escort and referral service to social, and health agencies, maintained a clothing exchange, school store, organized a small toy/book library, and recruited parent volunteers for teachers. The home visitors were four women residents of the community who had experience in community work. The visitors provided information to families about school expectations, the curriculum, rules, and materials. They encouraged families to participate in the Raise a Reader program. The action research teams involved teachers directly in studying home/school/community relations and in devising actions to improve their own practices. These teachers participated in training, did background reading, and conducted interviews with their fellow faculty members about parent involvement attitudes and practices in their own school. The teachers met monthly to discuss their findings and to design several projects aimed at increasing collaboration between the school and its families.

Epstein, J. L. (1991). Paths to partnership: What we can learn from federal, state, district, and school initiatives. *Phi Delta Kappan, 72*, 344-349.

This article provides an overview of successful initiatives for connecting schools, families, and communities. On the national level, Chapter 1 programs, FIRST (Fund for the Improvement and Reform of Schools and Teaching) programs, Head Start, and the new Center on Families, Communities, Schools, and Children's Learning are discussed. State initiatives in California, Illinois, Tennessee, Minnesota, Missouri, and Washington are described. District initiatives in Indianapolis, San Diego, Hamilton County, Ohio, Boston, New York, and Baltimore further illustrate promising practices for involving parents in their children's learning.

Key themes across all of these initiatives are: parents and schools share common goals; programs must continue beyond early childhood; programs must include all families; programs make teachers' jobs easier; program development is not quick and easy; grants encourage participation; family/school coordinators are crucial; programs need rooms for parents; programs must reach out to parents without requiring parents to come to school; technology (radio, television, audio- and videotapes, computers) can help improve parent involvement; programs need to be evaluated. The possibilities discussed in this article offer concrete suggestions and may be adopted or revised by other educators.

Heath, S. B. & McLaughlin, M. W. (1987). A child resource policy: Moving beyond dependence on school and family. *Phi Delta Kappan, 68*: 576-580.

The authors suggest that today's emphasis on the school and school policy as the mechanism for improving education is outdated. They suggest that we need to look at a national child resource policy. They call for a broader view of both the strategies and the institutions that should be working to improve the academic and emotional success of children. They state that the problems of today's children need more than a single policy solution, and they demand resources beyond the school and the family.

Henderson, A. (1987). *The evidence continues to grow: Parent involvement improves student achievement.* Columbia, MD: National Committee for Citizens in Education.

This annotated bibliography gathers research from 49 studies to make the case that parent involvement improves student achievement. The studies treat three broad approaches: parent-child approach; school-program approach; and community approach. The overview at the beginning of the document is an excellent summary of where we are and where we need to be in the research about parent involvement in education.

Henderson, A., Marburger, C., and Ooms, T. (1986). *Beyond the bake sale: An educator's guide to working with parents.* Columbia, MD: National Committee for Citizens in Education.

This excellent guide is a useful resource for educators. Based on research and practice, the guide provides the best of both worlds to the educator. Beginning with the five types of parent involvement, the guide provides exercises for educators to complete about their own school. The book contains opportunities to examine attitudes and to do self-assessments on your own school. The book concludes with recommendations, selected references, and selected resources.

McLaughlin, M. W. & Shields, P. M. (1987). Involving low-income parents in the schools: A role for policy. *Phi Delta Kappan, 69*: 156-160.

This article considers three broad questions: Does parent involvement work? Should it be a policy priority? And is it a feasible target for policy?

Although many districts have not carried out parent involvement in the way it was intended, those districts that have successfully engaged low-income parents have seen positive results for both programs and students. The authors recommend that teachers and administrators should take the lead in parent involvement; that parent-involvement activities should be scheduled for the convenience of parents; and that programs should be responsive to local political realties.

The authors argue for parent involvement policy because they believe low-income parents want to be involved in their children's education. They also cite demographic data (poverty, single parent families, latchkey children, non-English speaking) as a second reason for policy. A significant portion of today's school children come from types of family situations that cause concern and problems for learning.

The authors recognize that policy alone will not ensure parent involvement. They suggest a policy approach that combines both pressure and support. In addition to normative pressures from official policies, support in the form of materials, training, networks, mini-grants, and the like is required.

Moles, O. C. (1987). Who wants parent involvement? Interest, skills, and opportunities among parents and educators. ***Education and Urban Society, 19*****: 137-145.**

The author reports on the strong interest of parents and educators in building more support for home-school collaboration. He cites studies and polls from the National Education Association, the Gallup Poll, the Parents and Teachers Association, and recent research. Despite this strong interest, the skills of parents and teachers are not well-developed. The author calls for more parent involvement efforts and more evaluation of promising programs and strategies.

Nardine, F. E. & Morris, R. D. (1991). Parent involvement in the states: How firm is the commitment? ***Phi Delta Kappan, 72*****, 363-366.**

The authors discuss existing state legislation about parent involvement in education. Only in a few cases is the state legislation backed by adequate staff and funding. This article underscores the need for support for policy about parent involvement in education. The authors report on two studies they conducted on the states' investment in parent involvement in education and the status of parent involvement legislation and guidelines. The authors recommend that the states need to give parent involvement a much higher priority than currently exists.

National School Board Association. (1988). ***First teachers: Parent involvement in the public schools.*** **Alexandria, VA: author.**

This book is an excellent overview of parent involvement in educators. Specifically written for educators, the book considers the benefits of parent involvement, why parents aren't involved, models for parent involvement, successful parent involvement programs, and implications for school board policy.

The Appendix contains much useful information that is clearly written and easily accessible. Appendix A is a list of resources including books, reports, articles, and research studies. Appendix B is a sample policy checklist that trainers or participants might want to apply to the school districts with which they are working. Appendix C contains actual school district policies.

Oakes, J. & Lipton, M. (1990). ***Making the best of schools: A handbook for parents, teachers, and policymakers.*** **New Haven, CN: Yale University Press.**

This book provides a perspective on how parents can work with schools to achieve the best education for their children and all children. The authors draw on their own experiences as educational researchers, teachers, and parents to define a new set of educational basics. Oakes and Lipton argue persuasively that parents can make a difference in education and give specific recommendations to both parents and policymakers for improving education.

The authors suggest that policymakers can play a key role in mobilizing public commitment to education. They suggest that state and local regulations need to allow for teacher initiatives and creativity. Teachers need to be provided resources and technical assistance. They argue against top-down authority structures that maintain teachers' status as skilled workers and advocate for policies and programs that give teachers control over resources, classroom organization, content, and methods. Teachers need to be given training, materials, and opportunities to find creative ways to increase learning in the classroom and at home. Teachers need to be given opportunities to talk with other teachers and learn from one another.

The authors' suggestions for connecting school and home closely parallel their advice for reforming schools. When schools rid themselves of preferring standardization over innovation, they are free to explore all the avenues for working with families. Alliances with families, community groups, social service agencies, business and industry, and universities can help schools meet academic goals and can help families meet children's needs.

Palanki, A. & Burch, P. (with D. Davies). (1992). ***Mapping the policy landscape: What federal and state governments are doing to promote family-school-community partnerships.*** Report No. 7, Center on Families, Communities, Schools & Children's Learning. Boston, MA: Center on Families, Communities, Schools & Children's Learning.

This report outlines selected national, state, and local policy developments in 1991-92 in six areas related to family-school-community collaboration: interventions for infants and toddlers, family support, coordination of health and human services with education, parent choice, school restructuring, and Chapter 1. The report also develops an evaluative framework which looks at policy developments with seven criteria in mind: flexibility, intensity, continuity, universality, participation, coordination, and comprehensiveness.

Among the report's conclusions are:

(1) Many states have taken major initiatives in the six policy areas, but the activity across states is very uneven.
(2) Thirty states report some specific policy action on family support, parent education, or coordination of health, education, and other human services.

(3) Efforts to coordinate Head Start with other eduction, health and social services are currently underway at the Federal level.
(4) The U. S. Dept. of Education has increased its advocacy of the new flexibility in Chapter 1, but state and local response remains disappointing.
(5) There is increased interest in linking parent education and literacy with early childhood programs.
(6) Participation by families in policymaking has been broadened to include: (i) school-level governance; (ii) program planning and evaluation; (iii) state-level councils for facilitating coordination of services.

The authors conclude by calling for Federal, state, and local policymakers to take steps to actively coordinate policies that nurture family-school-community partnerships.

Rich, D. (1985). *The forgotten factor in school success: The family.* Washington, DC: The Home and School Institute.

This is a guide for policymakers about the importance of the family in school success. The guide has been written for educational leaders, policymakers, staff and constituents. The "20 Question Checklist" is of particular importance to Workshop #4. Answering "yes" to these questions ensures successful outcomes. The author reminds us that the school and the home are separate constituencies and policymakers must address the particular needs of each group.

Walberg, H. J. (1984). Improving the productivity of America's schools. *Educational Leadership, 41*, 19-27.

In his synthesis of 29 controlled studies of the past decade, Walberg found the 91 percent of the comparisons favored children in cooperative home-school programs. The effect was twice that of socioeconomic status, and some programs had effects ten times as large. The programs benefitted older as well as younger students. Walberg concludes that school parent programs to improve academic conditions in the home have an outstanding record of success in promoting achievement. He says that "the alterable curriculum of the home" is twice as predictive of academic learning as family socioeconomic status.

Warner, I. (1991). Parents in Touch: District leadership for parent involvement. *Phi Delta Kappan, 72*, 372-375.

As director of Parent in Touch, Indianapolis, the author describes a systemwide parent involvement program. The goal of the program is to facilitate two-way communication that enables parents to become partners with the schools. By working together schools and families can improve student achievement, attendance, and behavior.

Parents in Touch includes a wide variety of activities such as: parent/teacher conferences; dial-a-teacher; homework hotline, parent line/communicator; the Parent Focus Series; work-site seminars; Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork (TIPS); Superintendents Parent Advisory Council; and a Chapter 1 Program. The program is comprehensive and involves all five of Epstein's key elements of parent involvement (support, communication, volunteers, learning activities at home, and decision making).

District-wide support for parent involvement is shown by allowances for adjusted hours for parent/teacher conferences. The school administration and the Indianapolis Education Association have reached an agreement so that teachers can meet with all parents early in the school year to establish communication through an individual conference.

The district also supports activity calendars, student/teacher/parent (STP) contracts, and STP folders. The activity calendars include suggestions for daily activities with children and provide information about holiday schedules, test dates, report card schedules, and community/school resources. The STP contracts are offered to parents by schools that choose to use them; they are prepared in triplicate and signed by parents, teachers and students and are agreements to fulfill certain obligations such as clear assignments and completing assignments. STP folders go home weekly and are returned to school; the folders contain students' completed assignments and information that helps parents monitor homework. Each grade level tailors the information sent home in calendars, but all families from grades K-12 receive materials from the school which explain the curriculum and keep parents informed.

Williams, D. L., Jr. and Chavkin, N. F. (1990). Essential elements of strong parent involvement programs. *Educational Leadership, 47*, 18-20.

The authors conducted a survey of promising programs in the southwestern United States using a "key informant" approach and identified seven essential elements of strong parent involvement programs. This research clearly indicates that after a written policy was implemented, much district support was needed. Successful programs all reported the following essential elements in their programs: a formal, written policy; administrative support (funds, materials/product resources e.g. meeting space, communication equipment, computers, duplication/media equipment, and staff); training (for staff as well as parents and community members); partnership approach (joint planning, goal setting, definitions of roles, program assessment, development of supports, needs sensing, setting standards); two-way communication (frequent and regular); networking (to share information, resources, and technical expertise); and evaluation (formative evaluations allow districts to make program revisions on a continuous basis).

OTHER RESOURCES:

The Council of Great City Schools. (1987). *Results in the Making*. Washington, DC: author.

Goodson, B.D., Swartz, J. P., Millsap, M. A., Spielman, S.C., Moss, M., & D'Angelo, D. (1991). *Working with families: Promising programs to help parents support young children's learning*. Final report for the U. S. Department of Education, Office of Planing, Budget and Evaluation. Washington, DC.

Videotape. American Association of School Administrators. *Parents . . . Partners in Education*.

Booklet. American Association of School Administrators. *Parents . . . Partners in Education*. Available in English, Spanish, Cambodian, Hmong, Lao, and Vietnamese.

Pamphlet. National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education.

Building School-Family Partnerships for Learning: Workshops for Urban Educators

APPENDIX

Overview of This Volume

Federal Education Department Initiatives

- **Overview**
- **Family-School Partnership Program and Even Start**
- **Chapter 1 Flexibility Guidelines**

Diverse Urban Families

- **Schools Helping Poor Hispanic Parents**
- **The Puerto Rican Experience**
- **The African-American Experience**
- **The Chinese-American Experience**
- **Southeast Asians**
- **Parent Involvement and the Education of Limited-English-Proficient Students**

Strategies to Reach and Involve Parents

- **Involving Parents in the Education of Their Children**
- **Involving At-Risk Families in Their Children's Education**
- **Building A Successful Parent Center in an Urban School**
- **Description of a Parent Center**
- **The Little Things Make a Big Difference**

General Reading List (annotated)

Descriptions of Resource Organizations and A New Guide to Resources

Participant Evaluation Form

These materials may be useful for:

- telling prospective participants, schools, and districts about the workshops
- funding of projects (see Federal Initiatives)
- use of Chapter 1 funds for school-family partnerships
- descriptions of family life and home-school issues for racial, ethnic, and immigrant groups in your school (see Families workshop)
- more strategies for building school-family partnerships
- further personal reading and contact with resource groups
- evaluating workshops to improve future ones

BUILDING SCHOOL-FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS FOR LEARNING: WORKSHOPS FOR URBAN EDUCATORS

OVERVIEW

This sourcebook is designed to give urban educators new information and strategies for working with parents of elementary school students (grades K-6). Its five workshops written by eminent developers explore how family life, school programs, teacher practices, and district policies can help build school-family partnerships for learning. Each workshop is based on recent research and best available practices. The intended audience is primarily teachers, administrators, and other school personnel.

Four key concepts are threaded through these workshops: school-family partnerships, home learning activities, home learning environments, and family strengths. Home learning as used here includes homework, leisure reading, family discussions, and other home activities which supplement and reinforce schoolwork.

Many studies indicate that school-initiated activities to change the home educational environment can exert a strong influence on student learning, even in schools serving low-income and minority families. This sourcebook demonstrates various ways that schools can take the initiative in reaching out and working with families as equal partners.

Each workshop contains a leader's guide, transparency masters, and a set of handouts to be reproduced for participants. The leader's guide includes an overview of the workshop, notes on needed preparations, background information, and how to conduct each workshop activity.

Guidance for a two hour version is found within each workshop. Each has an optional warm-up activity and most include planning for next steps. This sourcebook is a revision of *Building Home-School Partnerships for Learning: Workshops for Urban Educators* which was pilot tested during the 1992-93 school year. Descriptions of the workshops follow.

Families as Learning Environments. Topics in this initial workshop include the benefits of parent involvement in home learning, characteristics of successful home learning environments, and the diversity of contemporary American families. It aims to help participants recognize both family strengths and the obstacles families face, and begins to explore how school resources can help them build more successful learning environments.

Communication Skills and Strategies. In this workshop participants are helped to analyze and develop their competencies for interpersonal communication with diverse parents. School and staff practices that may hinder and improve school-family communication are studied. Local communication practices for different occasions are analyzed in terms of making them more effective.

Homework and Home Learning Activities. High quality homework assignments and helping families reinforce and extend classroom instruction are central to this workshop. The related research is reviewed, and the importance of schoolwide homework guidelines and practices as well as the teacher's role are discussed. Interactive home learning assignments are developed, and some family learning programs identified.

School Programs and Practices. This workshop helps participants identify schoolwide factors that promote or hinder the development of school-family partnerships. It discusses five kinds of partnership roles, and uses this information to analyze two case studies. It makes the case for schoolwide actions to build strong partnerships with families.

School Districts. This workshop focuses on district-wide policies and policy supports for effective school-family partnership programs. Supports for policy during its development, implementation and maintenance are considered as well as some existing school board policies, case studies of actual policy implementation, and the current research literature. This workshop is designed for school board members and others engaged in district-level policy development or review.

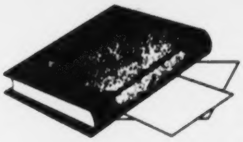
Appendix. It presents information on (1) further strategies to reach and involve parents; (2) federal government programs; (3) families of different racial, ethnic, and nationality backgrounds; and (4) annotated lists of readings and resource organizations; (5) a participant evaluation form.

The workshops may be presented individually and adapted to the leader's style and local needs. The most benefit is likely to come from presenting all four school-oriented workshops with time between sessions to read, try out some planned activities, and assess needs and progress.

There is no charge for the sourcebook, but supplies are limited. It comes on 3-hole paper and all parts may be reproduced without permission. Users must provide their own tabs to sections and ringbinder.

More on the structure and development of the workshops can be found in the introduction to the sourcebook. We would welcome any comments on the workshops, their content and format.

For further information contact Oliver Moles, Project Director, Office of Research, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, Washington, DC 20208-5649. Phone (202) 219-2211. 9/93



Department of Education Parent Involvement Initiatives

The U.S. Department of Education supports a number of programs and activities to increase the involvement of parents in their children's education. Initiatives range from programs designed to involve parents in their young children's literacy development to family–school partnership demonstrations to research centers studying families and home–school connections. Some of the Department's recent parent involvement initiatives are highlighted below.

Within the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE), the Chapter I program to aid schools with many low-income students now requires stronger local parent involvement efforts. Projects are required to inform parents of activities and consult regularly with them, to train teachers and other school staff to work effectively with parents, to help parents work with their children at home, and to ensure full participation by those who lack literacy skills or fluency in English. Regional technical assistance centers support the work of local Chapter I projects. These centers are assisted by a national Chapter I Parent Involvement Center which collects, organizes, and disseminates information via the regional centers to help Chapter I projects develop plans to involve parents in their children's education.

Another OESE program, Even Start, provides assistance to instructional programs that combine adult literacy outreach with training to enable parents to support the educational growth of their children in and out of school. It aims to integrate early childhood education (birth to age 7) and adult education.
The Office of Bilingual and Minority Languages administers the Family English Literacy Program, which helps limited-English-proficient adults gain competence in English, improve parenting skills, and increase home–school collaboration.

The White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans, established in the Department of Education, is charged with strengthening the nation's capacity to provide quality education for Hispanic Americans. The initiative will emphasize parental involvement, particularly the responsibility of families and parents to be teachers of their children and advocates for their children's education.

The Office of Special Education Programs supports a network of 60 Parent Training and Information (PTI) centers in all 50 states and Puerto Rico to enable parents to participate more effectively with professionals in meeting the educational needs of children with disabilities. Another program, Technical Assistance to Parent Projects, provides technical assistance and coordination to the 60 PTIs and to developing minority programs in urban and rural locations.

The Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) supports a new center on Families, Communities, Schools, and Children's Learning. Over the next five years, this center will conduct research, development, policy analysis, and dissemination projects to provide new information about how families, communities, and schools foster student motivation, learning, and development, and how to improve the connections among these social institutions. This center is a consortium headed by Boston University. Another new center, on Education in the Inner Cities, located at Temple University, will study the role of families in the educational process and ways to enhance the family's contribution to education from a multicultural perspective. The recently awarded Southwest Educational Development Laboratory contract will promote home and school connections for at-risk students in its five-state region during the next 5 years.

Also within OERI, the Fund for the Improvement and Reform of Schools and Teaching (FIRST) sponsors demonstration grants through its Family–School Partnership Program to eligible Chapter I local education agencies for projects that increase the involvement of parents in their children's education. Thirty-one new awards were made by FIRST in September 1990.

Other programs and initiatives supported by the U.S. government and private organizations are highlighted in this issue.

(From The ERIC Review, Vol. I, Issue 3, Sept. 1991)

FAMILY-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

The Family-School Partnership Program in the U.S. Department of Education supports a wide range of cooperative activities such as conferences, workshops on child development, effective parenting techniques, ways of reinforcing instruction in the home, and how to access community support services that build strong family/school/community partnerships aimed at increasing student academic performance.

In FY 1993, $1.6 million was awarded to 12 school districts in eight states to fund training for parents of disadvantaged children on how their child learns and how they as parents can become more involved in their child's education. An additional $2 million is being used to continue projects started in fiscal year 1991.

The Family-School Partnership program is open only to eligible Chapter I local education agencies for projects that increase the involvement of parents in their children's education.

For more information contact: the Fund for Improvement and Reform of Schools and Teaching, U.S. Department of Education, 555 New Jersey Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20208-5524. Telephone (202) 219-1496.

EVEN START

The Even Start program is now handled through state departments of education. Inquiries should be directed to these offices.

CHAPTER 1
FLEXIBILITY
A Guide to Opportunities in Local Projects

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Elementary and Secondary Education
Compensatory Education Programs

February 1992

FOREWORD

The U.S. Department of Education encourages educators and the public to learn about the flexibility that is built into federal programs. With this information, educators can tailor federally assisted services to supplement regular schooling activities and also support broader improvements in educational programs.

John T. MacDonald
Assistant Secretary for
Elementary and Secondary Education

Mary Jean LeTendre
Director
Compensatory Education Programs

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

The guide describes areas of flexibility authorized in Chapter 1 that can assist educators in implementing Chapter 1 projects. It should be used as a source of ideas. To implement this flexibility, please refer to the Chapter 1 statute, regulations, and policy manual. These documents contain additional requirements and considerations that may affect the manner in which the flexibility is implemented. Please consult the statute, regulations, and policy manual for specific guidance in each area of flexibility.

`(excerpts from this guide follow...)`

INVOLVING THE PARENTS OF CHAPTER 1 STUDENTS

Districts that receive Chapter 1 funds are required to involve the parents of Chapter 1 students in project-related activities. Accordingly, Chapter 1 funds may be used to conduct a wide variety of services that promote parent participation. These include activities that encourage contact between the home and the Chapter 1 project, involve parents in school activities, and develop parents' skills in assisting their children with schoolwork.

Districts attempting to increase the involvement of Chapter 1 parents in their children's schooling may use Chapter 1 funds for a variety of activities. For example, districts may use Chapter 1 funds to pay a parent of a participating student to serve as a Chapter 1 classroom aide. In addition, districts may use Chapter 1 funds to pay for parents to attend conferences that train them to conduct home-based educational activities and participate more effectively in the local Chapter 1 project. Districts may also use Chapter 1 funds to establish a Chapter 1 resource center (within or outside of school) for parents to prepare materials to use in improving their children's skills. Other activities for parental involvement in Chapter 1 include parent conferences; reporting to parents on their children's progress; hiring, training, and utilizing parental involvement liaison workers; training of personnel; the provision of Chapter 1 program information as well as responses to parent recommendations; and the solicitation of parents' suggestions in planning, developing, and operating the program.

For the facilitation of parental involvement in Chapter 1, reasonable Chapter 1 expenditures for refreshments during parent meetings and training, particularly when the sessions run through mealtime, are allowable. Other allowable Chapter 1 expenditures include the transportation cost to and from meetings when parents cannot afford it and the cost of babysitting services when necessary in order to support the parents' attendance and to enable them to more effectively participate in the program.

Innovation Projects

Innovation projects offer other forms of flexibility by enabling a district to use up to and including 5 percent of its Chapter 1 funds to:

- train Chapter 1 and non-Chapter 1 teachers and librarians to understand and address the special needs of Chapter 1 students and ways of integrating Chapter 1 activities into the regular classroom;
- encourage parental involvement through innovative approaches or the expansion of exemplary programs;
- encourage the involvement of community and private sector resources in meeting the needs of educationally disadvantaged children; and

For additional guidance on the flexibilities contained in Chapter 1, school districts should contact their respective State Departments of Education.

DIVERSE URBAN FAMILIES

- **Schools Helping Poor Hispanic Parents**
- **The Puerto Rican Experience**
- **The African-American Experience**
- **The Chinese-American Experience**
- **Southeast Asians**
- **Parent Involvement and the Education of Limited-English-Proficient Students**

Schools Helping
Poor Hispanic Parents Strengthen
Home Learning

How Differences among Hispanic groups
affect their orientation to school
and prospects for home learning.

What special strengths and beliefs
of Hispanic parents affect their
relationship with schools.

How schools can build on Hispanic strengths.

Are Hispanics All The Same?

Hispanics in the United States are not a homogeneous group. Although united by a common language and an origin in Spanish colonization, they are separated by age, race, socioeconomic status, geography, the nature of their arrival—immigration, migration, exile, or asylum—and by the length of their residence here, as well as by their country of origin.

In 1990 the Hispanic population had reached 22.4 million, about ninety percent of whom were concentrated in the urban centers of nine states: Florida, New York, Illinois, Texas, California, Arizona, New Jersey, New Mexico and Colorado. Nearly two-thirds of all U.S. Hispanics are of Mexican origin. Fourteen percent have roots in either Central or South American countries, ten percent are Puerto Ricans and five percent Cubans. Other Hispanics constitute the remaining seven percent.

Despite Hispanic diversity of background, custom and tradition, it is income and education level that have the greatest effect on how Hispanics relate to schools and home learning. Most middle-income Hispanics fulfill schools' expectations for parent involvement. Many poorer parents, on the other hand, share common beliefs that serve as barriers to parents as teachers. This paper, therefore, addresses the needs of the sixty-two percent of Hispanic families who fall below the national median family-income level. Much of the information this short document conveys grew out of a three-year national project sponsored by the Hispanic Policy Development Project (HPDP), during which forty-two programs explored a wide variety of activities designed to involve poor Hispanic parents in their children's formal education. Some of the programs were extraordinarily successful. Others tried but failed. Both failures and successes provided valuable insights into why schools and poor Hispanic parents often are unable to connect.

"How To" Comments
From: Siobhan Nicolau
Hispanic Policy Development Project
36 East 22nd Street
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Why Poor Hispanic Parents Are Not More Involved in Their Children's Formal Education

Most low-income Hispanic parents want their children to succeed in school. But the vast majority of low-income, newly-arrived Hispanic parents, and many low-income Hispanics born in the United States, do not know that the expectations of schools in the U.S. are different from the expectations of schools in their countries of origin or in their parents' countries of origin. As a consequence, many poor Hispanic youngsters, like many other low-income children, come into the classroom unprepared to tackle school work that their middle-class peers find easy because their parents have not known how to provide them with the social, linguistic and cognitive skills U. S. teachers expect.

What Are the Differences in Expectations?
How Do They Affect Hispanic Parenting?

In Latin-American countries the role of parents and the role of school in relation to education are sharply delineated and divided; Parents have a serious duty to instill respect and proper behavior in their children. That is a parent's job. It is the school's job to instill knowledge. Teaching is not the parents' business and most low-income parents are unaware of specific practices—such as talking and reading to children, and encouraging their curiosity—that lay the academic skills foundation.

Furthermore, some Hispanic parents are reluctant to place preschoolers in institutional care, while still others find that it is unavailable or unaffordable. As a consequence, less than a quarter of Hispanic youngsters enter kindergarten with any preschool or daycare experience. Many have never been out of their immediate neighborhoods.

Additionally many low-income Hispanic parents are uninformed about the value of free out-of-school activities—such as trips to parks, zoos, museums and libraries—that may provide a solid base for understanding the larger world and may reinforce what youngsters learn in class every day. Deeply concerned for the safety of their children, some Hispanic parents do not allow their children to participate in school field trips.

While most Hispanic parents understand that children should do their homework, few have been exposed to the idea that school-age children should, as Dr. Reginald Clark proposes, spend up to 20 hours a week engaged in other "constructive" home learning activities, such as reading for fun, writing, pursuing hobbies, talking with adult family members, or playing games in the family and watching educational television.

Yet Hispanic parents take parenting very seriously. They work hard to teach their children essential social skills such as cooperation and loyalty, and they deliver them to the school neat, well disciplined and respectful. These are all positive values, greatly appreciated by teachers. However, *respectful* in Hispanic culture often is expressed by not looking adults in the eye, not speaking to adults unless spoken to first, not volunteering answers, and not asking questions. Teachers unfamiliar with the culture can interpret this behavior as rudeness or withdrawal, or just plain excessive shyness.

Because many poor Hispanic parents have not had the opportunity to attend high school, they often do not themselves have wide vocabularies in Spanish or English. In addition, casual conversation between adults and children and reading to children is not the norm in many Hispanic poor households. As a consequence, many youngsters enter school without the language command enjoyed by most middleclass children. This causes a problem for both English-speaking, Spanish-speaking and bilingual children. The monolingual Spanish-speaking children, however, face two hurdles when they enter the education system—they must accelerate their linguistic development *and* learn a new language in order to succeed in U.S. schools.

Many Hispanic parents—like other poor parents—are unaware of the crucial role they can play in supporting their children's school accomplishment in the home. Hispanics respect the school system deeply. But they tend to relate to it as most Americans relate to doctors or lawyers or priests—with awe. In their view, schools are in control and teachers are the experts who are not to be questioned. They do not feel that they have any role to play in the education process and they do not think that they belong in school unless their child has been causing trouble. **However, the strong respect for schools that now works to restricts parents' teaching, can be harnessed to strengthen home learning.** The key lies in reaching out to the parents in a sensitive non-threatening manner and *explaining how the system here works.* Remember, most Hispanic parents want their children to succeed.

Why Haven't More Schools Recognized Why Poor Hispanic Parental Involvement Is Low?

A goodly portion of school personnel are unfamiliar with the family traditions and life realities of the Hispanic parents whose children are rapidly filling their classrooms. And few teachers or administrators are offered guidance or training to help them interpret Hispanic behavior, reach out to Hispanic parents, or understand the considerable strengths Hispanics can bring to the education process. Left on their own, perplexed by the behavior of parents and children alike, they tend to misread. They take the reserve, the non-confrontational manners, and the non-involvement of Hispanic parents to mean that the parents are uncaring, passive and uninterested in their children's education. And the children's respectful demeanor and reluctance to ask questions or volunteer answers, can be mistaken for passive resistance. Language compounds the problem and the teachers are understandably frustrated. In the teachers' view, the children aren't learning as they should and the parents don't seem to be helping.

What Can Be Done About It?

The isolation that exists between so many Hispanic families and the schools their children attend need not prevail. The findings of the Hispanic Policy Development Project's forty-two programs showed that schools that sincerely wanted to bridge the gap and were willing to extend themselves, enjoyed extraordinary success in involving parents in their children's education.

The experience of the successful programs sponsored by the Hispanic Policy Develpment Project produced the following lessons:

Effective parent involvement programs require——

Committed Leadership from the top. Half-hearted attempts will result in half-baked efforts. The school has to really want Hispanic parental involvement. If they do not, the parents will sense it.

Flexibility. Few Hispanic parents will respond to the outreach efforts that effectively recruit middle-class mainstream parents. Business as usual won't work. Schools have to adapt to the parents' needs, concerns and fears—not vice versa.

Sensitivity. Many Hispanic parents are uncomfortable in the presence of school personnel. Some are downright scared. The challenge for the schools is to get close enough to the parents to convey the message of how they and the parents can work together.

Most low-income Hispanic parents, for the diverse reasons described above, resist entering into close relationships with schools. Therefore, approaches to recruit Hispanic parents require time and flexible scheduling. Successful outreach efforts are built on——

- personal outreach.
- warm, non-judgmental communication.
- the ability to convey respect for the parents' feelings and needs.

OUTREACH

The experience of the forty-two HPDP programs showed that the single, and in most instances—**the only**—successful method of outreach is the home visit or the personal chat with the parent outside the school. Home visits can often be arranged during a personal chat outside the school, or parents can be informed about home visits when they register their children for school. Phoning is seldom a useful way to open relations. Parents may not have phones, and those that do, may not be comfortable speaking to strangers, particularly if the caller is not fluent in Spanish. Letters, particularly letters on school letterhead, are not effective. They frighten parents. Personal outreach is the key, and the message that will open the door is the one that says—**We want to talk to you about how we can work together to assure the success of your child in school. We need your help.** (Caution: Mothers are in charge of school matters, and they should be visited by females. A proper Hispanic woman does not receive a man in her home.)

The home visit not only projects the image of a friendly school that cares, it also helps the school better understand who their parents are. Do they speak English? Are they two-parent families? Does Mother work? Are the children in the care of grandparents? Is the neighborhood dangerous? etc. Rational parent programs can only be designed when schools know who the parents are. (Caution: It may take more than one visit to overcome parental reluctance to become involved in teaching.)

Don't send home letters on school letterhead. Many Hispanic parents will think it is bringing bad news.

Don't send letters at all if you can avoid it, but certainly never send an initial invitation that implies that the parents are deficient, such as, *Dear Mrs. Fulano: Why don't you come and learn how to be a good parent?*

THE FIRST MEETING

The first organized meeting must be a warm, comfortable, profitable experience for the parents. Otherwise the first meeting will be the last.

The meeting should be fun. Gaining the parents' confidence is a process. It takes time to overcome their suspicion, fear and reluctance. Make it a party. Don't talk at them. Don't load the meeting with content. Just tell them you are there to serve them and you hope you can all work together, because they and you are the teachers of their children. Then feed them and show them wonderful things the children have done. Or have the children perform.

Think seriously about *not holding the meeting in the school.* Find a place where the parents will be more comfortable. Look for someplace on their turf. One successful HPDP program took over the local McDonalds and fed the parents. The teachers and the principal donned McDonalds' uniforms and served. Another held Tupperware type parties in parents' homes and the school personnel went out into the neighborhood. Another made arrangements with the local laundromat. Still another held the meeting in the housing project's communal space. When there is an existing cadre of involved parents, they often can help plan the first meeting. Often, however, Hispanic parent involvement is nil, and schools must start from square one. (Caution: Involved parents who have assumed leadership positions in the school do not always welcome the influx of new parents who may threaten their control or position. Don't use them as your ambassadors if you are not sure that they want the other parents to be involved.)

Think imaginatively.
Consider the hour of the meeting carefully.
Consider the need for transportation.
Consider childcare.

THE NEXT MEETINGS

Find out what the parents want to discuss. Focus on their needs and their agenda. If schools respond to the parents' needs, they will respond to the school's.

Consult with them.
Seek their advice.
Make the partnership real.

Don't talk over their heads.
Don't ask questions that can have wrong answers.
Don't confuse lack of education with lack of intelligence.

Parents can be your best allies. Many fear that their lack of schooling means they can't help their children. It's your job to take the lead in showing them how much **you** need their help and how much their children need their help in home learning. Schools must show the parents that they value them.

Some of the kinds of activities undertaken by the HPDP projects that proved effective in keeping parents involved, overcoming their reluctance, and supporting home learning are:

Make & Take Workshops where parents learn how to make educational tools they can use at home—games, flashcards and activity boxes containing paper, crayons, scissors, etc.

Community Projects such as painting murals, cleaning up lots, planting gardens etc. When such activities include parents and teachers and administrator, they build spirit and a sense of community, and they allow parents to make contributions in a non-judgmental setting.

Parent Activity Corners in children's classrooms. Parents can sit in class with their children and listen to lessons. It helps parents to better understand what constitutes their children's school day and what it is that children are learning. As a consequence, they are better able to support learning at home.

Tutoring and Homework Centers where students receive assistance with homework and parents can attend workshops, ESL classes or parenting/homework—help classes.

Informal Small Workshops—initially on subjects parents identify—later on issues the schools find pressing.

Parents' Rooms—comfortably furnished with couches and chairs that can serve as resource centers where parents can borrow materials, and as places where parents can meet together, can confer with teachers, and can take classes and receive tutoring.

Cautions:

Don't treat the parents like students who are tall.

Don't push the parents immediately into the PTA if they are uncomfortable with that idea.

Don't imply that the parents have to change the way they are rearing their children. Tell them that they should consider building on their tradition by adding to it those practices that will better prepare their children for U.S. schools.

Don't assume that the parents have no knowledge or strengths to bring to the partnership.

Don't pressure the parents to speak English at home if that is not a family's dominate language. Parenting and the transmission of values require full command of language. What is taught in English can be taught in Spanish. In addition, fluency and literacy in two languages increases an individual's job options and expands intellectual horizons.

What Strengths Do Hispanic Parents Bring to the Partnership?

Hispanic families embody the following strengths that schools can build on to promote effective home learning. They are all values that schools value——

A respect for education and educators.

Parenting practices that promote cooperation, courtesy, and loyalty.

A strong emphasis on discipline and correct behavior.

A deep sense of dignity that requires that relationships be built on mutual respect.

Hispanic parents are an untapped resource for home learning and for general support of schools. Though it takes time and imagination and persistence to overcome the barriers that historically have separated schools and Hispanic parents, it is well worth the effort. The process of bringing Hispanic parents into partnership is a learning experience that produces significant and basic benefits for parents, children, and for school personnel as well.

Parents experience a sense of inclusion and achievement. They discover how important they are in their children's intellectual development. They acquire teaching skills. They feel wanted and needed.

Schools, on the other hand, gain first-hand knowledge about cross-cultural communication, they rediscover the fun of flexibility, and they experience the educator's ultimate satisfaction—

—children are learning;

—joy is put back in their days.

Everybody wins!

(This substance of this paper was drawn from the Hispanic Policy Development Project's handbook for school personnel entitled 'Together Is Better: Building Strong Partnerships Between Schools and Hispanic Parents'. 'Together' and two parents' guides—'Queridos Padres' in Spanish, and 'You're A Parent; You're A Teacher' in English, were published in1990. All three are distributed by the Hispanic Policy Development Project, 1001 Connecticut Avenue NW, Washington DC 20036.)

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT REPORT

CENTER ON FAMILIES, COMMUNITIES, SCHOOLS & CHILDREN'S LEARNING May 1992, No. 2

The Puerto Rican Experience

Center researcher Nitza Hidalgo views the educational achievement of Puerto Rican children through a "socio-historical lens," examining Puerto Rico's historical relationship with the United States, the migration experience, family roles and values, acculturation processes, and pressure on the family structure in the United States.

While the Irish-American experience was based on assimilation, the Puerto Rican experience is based on an effort to adapt to a new culture while maintaining a sense of "PuertoRicanness," which denotes the maintenance of "a fundamental tie to a Puerto Rican cultural heritage," according to Hidalgo. Thus cultural factors that affect the educational achievement of Puerto Rican children, instead of disappearing in an assimilation that allows schools to continue business as usual, require that schools make changes to accommodate.

Historical Relationship

The United States took possession of Puerto Rico in 1898, and Puerto Ricans were given U.S. citizenship in 1917 (without being asked if they wanted it, Hidalgo notes). The current status of Puerto Rico as a free associated state, or commonwealth, was established in 1950, but that title obscures the ambiguous political status of the island. Puerto Ricans cannot vote in presidential elections and their one congressional representative also has no voting power. U.S. federal government agencies implement federal laws and federal assistance programs in Puerto Rico.

Hidalgo describes a one-sided United States-Puerto Rico relationship. "The hegemonic relationship is defined by the political subordination and control of Puerto Rico's future, the subordination of Puerto Rico's economic interests to those of the U.S., the creation of a captive market for U.S. products, and use of Puerto Rico as a source of raw material and cheap labor for U.S. business ventures." She notes that Puerto Ricans have been compared to Native Americans as a "trapped minority" whose land has been taken away from them.

Migration to the U.S.

The mass migration of Puerto Ricans to the United States began in the 1940s, primarily because of high unemployment and overpopulation of the island and needs for labor in the United States. Puerto Ricans, already U.S. citizens, were not immigrants, but migrants.

Between 1940 and 1950, over 180,000 migrated to the U.S.; another 370,000 migrated between 1950 and 1960. Most "migrated with their families; they were young, skilled, and literate in Spanish with an average of eight years of schooling." They entered low level factory, manufacturing and service occupations.

Hidalgo identifies three current categories of Puerto Rican migrants: the recently arrived migrants in search of employment, migrant workers moving back and forth between Puerto Rico and the U.S. as the work demands, and U.S.-born second, third, and fourth generation Puerto Ricans.

Although Puerto Rican migrants have experienced U.S. influence in their own country, Hidalgo notes that their encounter with North American culture is still jarring—they face "adjustment to a new language, unfamiliar personality traits and world views, the impersonal behavior of a highly bureaucratized society, a faster lifestyle in daily situations, and constant and sustained interactions with people from different ethnic groups."

Also, although Puerto Ricans include a range of racial types in their ethnic group, being descended from Taino Indians, Spanish, and Africans, they encounter discrimination and stereotyping because of the "rigid racial categorizations that exist in the U.S.," Hidalgo points out. Such discrimination, as with the Irish, became most pronounced once Puerto Ricans reached a critical mass in population in U.S. cities such as New York.

In the face of culture shock and discrimination, the Puerto Rican response has been similar to the Chinese-American response—to seek acculturation, not assimilation—to "establish themselves in the new society without disconnecting from their roots and identity." Connections to their Puerto Rican heritage, Hidalgo notes, are maintained by "yearly visits to relatives and extended families living in Puerto Rico, by living in ethnic neighborhoods where the culture is remade and reinforced, by the use of the Spanish language and the Spanish language media that keeps U.S. residents informed of news from Puerto Rico, and by a strong primary cultural identification as Puerto Ricans."

To assist the acculturation process, and in response to economic conditions that eliminated their initially good paying but low status factory jobs and left Puerto Rican median income at a little over half that of the total population, Puerto Ricans have organized into local community, city-wide, and national groups. These groups provide mutual assistance in seeking better economic conditions while supporting Puerto Rican family and cultural values.

Hidalgo notes that the main instrument of socialization and support for Puerto Ricans is the family, which in inner-city neighborhoods relies on "informal support networks when dealing with economic, health, social, or emotional problems." Later in this issue of the *Report* Center researcher Melvin Delgado examines how school-family-community partnerships might incorporate networks in promoting educational achievement of Puerto Rican children.

The Puerto Rican Family and Cultural Values

In her examination of the Chinese-American experience, Sau-Fong Siu cautioned strongly: "The typical Chinese-American family does not exist." Swap and Krasnow noted of the Irish: "... there is no single story to be told, but many stories." Hidalgo issues a similar caution about making generalizations about racial and ethnic groups: "What must be remembered is that there are as many variations and differences existing within a group as there are similarities."

She identifies a number of values that are practiced in a variety of forms. Puerto Rican culture values *respeto*—the general respect for one's own and others' human dignity and a more specific respect for others' authority and stature. The culture values personalism, an inner worth that is not based on material status but on fulfilling your personal role in life, doing what is expected.

Closely related to personalism is reciprocity, a closeness and caring for others that requires the "genuine expression of generosity," which is most significant and expected among family members and neighbors. Family obligation is deeply ingrained, Hidalgo notes, and family unity and interdependence are highly valued—close and frequent contact between family members is expected, as is "depending on the family for help in time of need...."

> *". . . individual families support their children to achieve in school and to fulfill their responsibility as family members."*

Hidalgo notes that Puerto Rican families in the U.S. now range across five family types, from a nuclear family that can contain the mother, father, their children, the children of other unions, and the children of friends, to the traditional extended family that can contain grandparents, parents, and children, with frequent visitations from aunts and uncles. Puerto Rican family concepts include *compadrazqo* (co-parenthood) and *hijos de crianza* (informal adoption of children. Both practices bring friends and their children into close familial relations.

But the Puerto Rican extended family structure and values have been weakened by poverty, their migration and their adjustment to the norms in the U.S. The family's function as a social support network is endangered by these external conditions. For example, one study found that second generation Puerto Rican children in the U.S. were less respectful of the family and displayed less generosity toward others. And these children, although they were well aware of the value of retaining the Spanish language, were nonetheless losing it.

Puerto Rican School Achievement

Puerto Rican traditional values promote school achievement. Hidalgo states: "Children are taught to respect authority; they are taught to listen to teachers and to act in ways that ingratiate them to teachers. Puerto Rican families support their children's achievement by training them to be respectful of others, not to be *malcriado* [ill-bred]."

"The Puerto Rican community views education as essential for their improvement in this society," Hidalgo says, and ". . . individual families support their children to achieve in school and to fulfill their responsibility as family members. Since the individual perceives one's identity from within a system of family relationships, and family obligations promote inner self-worth, then fulfilling one's responsibilities in schools means fulfilling one's role in the family, doing what is expected of you."

But for many Puerto Rican children, community and family support does not yet translate into high educational achievement. Hidalgo cites the statistics: only 58 percent of Puerto Ricans have completed high school; in 1983, based on New York City data, only half of the Puerto Rican children were reading at or above grade level and just 54 percent were at or above grade level in mathematics.

Initial explanations for Puerto Rican children's lack of school achievement, as with many immigrant groups, focused on the cultural deficit model, which finds deficiencies in the student populations served by schools. This erroneous perspective posits that low achievement comes from home environments lacking "appropriate linguistic, cognitive and social stimulation. . . ." Thus the problem is seen to exist within the individual child and the family. This view, Hidalgo notes, allows the school to "justify maintenance of the status quo, for example, by adding a remediation program for students or creating a parenting skills class for community members."

Hidalgo notes that the cultural deficit model has exerted great influence on educational practice and social science research, but other interpretations are gaining ground. These include models of cultural conflict, teacher expectations, within-school structures, and resistance theory. Hidalgo concludes that while the other models explain particular aspects of the problem, only the resistance theory provides a comprehensive explanation.

Cultural conflict. Differences between the student's home culture and school culture are not a problem because they exist, but because they result in miscommunications and misinterpretations by teachers and students which, in turn, produce conflicts that lead to lower achievement by Puerto Rican children.

Teacher Expectations. Teachers (especially if they accept the cultural deficit model) may expect lower achievement from poor minority groups and reveal such expectations through their behaviors. "Given the primacy of interpersonal relationships within the Puerto Rican culture," Hidalgo notes, "the expectations of teachers, because they are seen as significant authority figures, would likely be important to students."

Within-School Structures. Students from low socioeconomic backgrounds and of different races may experience qualitatively different school experiences. Tracking and ability grouping are primary examples of structures that may expose poor and minority children to lower academic content and quality of instruction.

Resistance Theory. The routine practices and unexamined beliefs of schools reflect the dominant cultural system and, while not intending to, stigmatize children who have other cultural values. These thoughtless practices neglect these children's needs and demean their heritage. Poor and minority students may resist these assimilation practices through low school participation and achievement.

Resistance theory, according to Hidalgo, incorporates elements of other current theories and "helps us look at how low school achievement is a historically complex phenomenon. It looks outside the school—into the local community and the broader social order—as well as within school practices to identify the roots of failure and success."

Hidalgo concludes that the educational achievement of Puerto Rican children requires "schooling that grounds Puerto Rican students in the rich traditions of their culture," carried out through home and school partnerships which recognize Puerto Rican families as a strong support system, which support Puerto Rican families in culturally sensitive ways, which promote parents' learning about the requirements of school, and which also promote the training of teachers to understand the socialization and strengths of Puerto Rican families. ∎

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT REPORT

CENTER ON FAMILIES, COMMUNITIES, SCHOOLS & CHILDREN'S LEARNING March 1993, No.3

LAST FEATURE ARTICLE IN A FOUR-PART SERIES

How Racial and Ethnic Family and Community Characteristics Affect Children's Achievement

How do families of different cultural and racial backgrounds and income levels support their children's school success in the primary grades?

What differences exist among middle- and low-income African-American, Puerto Rican, Chinese-American, and Irish-American families and communities, and what can we learn from each about how race, class, and culture interact with schooling to affect children's learning?

Center researchers at Wheelock College—Susan McAllister Swap, Theresa Perry, Nitza Hidalgo, Sau-Fong Siu, and Josephine Bright—are examining these questions through an ethnographic study of how families and communities support and influence children's learning in these four ethnic groups.

Our reporting of the results of these studies began in the Feb. 1992 *Report* with Sau-Fong Siu's literature review examining the Chinese-American experience and history in this country. The May 1992 *Report* presented the findings of Susan Swap and Jean Krasnow's study of the Irish-American experience and Nitza Hidalgo's study of the Puerto Rican experience. In this issue, we report Theresa Perry's steps toward the development of a theory of African-American school achievement and its consequences for how the family, community, and school support the educational achievement of their children.

The African-American Experience

"Past discussions and attempts to develop an explanatory framework for the school achievement of African-Americans have disproportionately focused on school failure," Perry attests. The relevant question is not how to explain failure, but, given the history and experiences of African-Americans in this country, what explanatory model is capable of explaining and interpreting the intellectual achievements of African-Americans.

Perry explains: "Given the environment of African-Americans, their collective history and memory as a people, the ideology of the larger society about them, their representation in the media, and the structuring of inequality in school and in the world, the historically grounded and educationally useful question is 'How have African-American families and communities, for more than 200 years, developed and socialized children to achieve in school?'"

In addition, Perry notes, discussions of African-American school achievement need to focus on the extra-cognitive, social, and emotional competencies that African-American children need in order to succeed in school. These discussions should also incorporate an understanding of how African-Americans have historically understood the aims and purposes of schooling.

In her search for a theory of African-American school achievement, Perry

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reflects on the work of Black family scholars who have studied racial socialization; examines socio-historical work on the social construction of "whiteness," and examines the ongoing investigations of educational anthropologists into the relative power of the "cultural difference" and "social mobility" explanations for school achievement among racial minorities.

Racial Socialization

Perry notes, "Scholars who study racial socialization all note the conflicting and multiple role demands and the complexities involved in socializing African-American children for adult competence."

An especially powerful concept, Perry says, is Boikins' and Tom's notion of the "triple quandary"—to become competent adults, African-American children have to successfully negotiate the demands of three distinct and conflicting roles: their role in the mainstream society, their role as a racial minority, and their role within the Black culture.

Perry revises this paradigm, focusing on the idea of membership. African-American children seeking adult competence need to do more than meet the triple role demands, they need to negotiate actual membership in these groups.

"In order to achieve in school," Perry says, "African-American children have to be able to negotiate membership in mainstream society, in the Black community defined as a racially discriminated group, and in a cultural group in opposition to which whiteness has been constructed as a social category."

The focus on African-American children becoming actual members of these groups, Perry stresses, means that competency becomes a matter of "being and doing," not just assuming different roles.

Social Construction of Whiteness

Perry explores the work of historical and literary scholars on the construction of "whiteness" as a cultural identity and the implications of that construction for school achievement.

She cites accounts of how this occurred during the period between the American Revolution and the Civil War, when white working-class males were coming to depend on laboring for wages and needed some way to maintain their image and feelings of being independent and not servile. Thus "white male workers defined themselves in counterpoint to Blacks —to be white was to be not-Black, not-slave."

To become competent adults, African-American children have to successfully negotiate the demands of three distinct and conflicting roles: their role in mainstream society, their role as a racial minority, and their role within the Black culture.

This construction of whiteness as a cultural identity, Perry shows, becomes important in revising the "cultural difference" explanation for African-American children's school achievement or failure.

Cultural Difference Model

When children enter school, they bring with them the culture of their home and community—linguistic forms, discourse patterns, values, and behaviors—which may differ from the culture of the school. Cultural difference is not a barrier to school achievement. It can, however, become a barrier based on how the culture is perceived by the teachers and the school.

"Certain cultural features might signal social status, occasion lowered expectations, or be the source of stigma," Perry says. "Further, the teacher and the school might fail to draw upon and incorporate the child's cultural formations into the culture of the school and its teaching and learning practices."

Perry describes how the cultural difference explanation has been expanded by Bordieux' notion of "cultural captial." According to Bordieux, children come to school with varying degrees of "cultural capital"—the values, behaviors, dispositions, and tastes that the culture currently in power has institutionalized.

Perry notes that according to Bordieux, "Cultural capital is like economic capital." Perry says, "It has an exchange value." She points out that ". . .the very structuring of school and instruction affords automatic advantages and/or disadvantages to individuals based on the amount of culutural captial they bring with them to school."

Perry uses the work on the social construction of whiteness to critique Bordieux' notion of cultural capital and its ability to explain variations in the school performance of African-Americans. She hypothesizes that in addition to "cultural capital," teachers may explicitly or implicitly require of African-American children that they possess "that narrow subset of qualities associated with 'whiteness'. . ., the ability to be reserved, to subordinate emotions and affections to reason, to constrain physical activity, to present a disciplined exterior."

The Social Mobility Model

John Ogbu's social mobility explanation for school achievement argues that cultural difference is not the critical variable which predicts school success for racial minorities—rather, it is the terms of their group's incorporation into the host society. The model relates the current poor performance of African-American children in school to their status as an involuntary ("castelike"), racially-oppressed minority.

The model theorizes that over generations, involuntary minorities have occupied the status of an oppressed people, been confined to low level jobs, and possessed little or no political power. Thus African-American children get a clear message from the realities of their lives and their communities—society will not really reward African-Americans for academic achievement. This has led to a lack of effort optimism in African-American children—the rejection of the belief that making an effort in school will pay off for them in the future.

"According to Ogbu," Perry notes, "the parents of involuntary minorities may tell their children to work hard, but they also may communicate to them the message that hard work really doesn't matter, that it won't pay off. They have difficulty communicating to their children the effort optimism that supports the desire for school achievement."

The social mobility explanation also posits that the lack of a payoff for African-American success in school has also led to "conflictual relationships with school which have resulted in a deep distrust of schools and school people," and a growing feeling among some African-American youngsters "that school success is oppositional to their cultural identity."

The social mobility model, according to Perry, is flawed in its failure to consider African-American educational history and African-American beliefs about the aims and purposes of education. It overemphasizes the notion of schooling as primarily linked to the job market and work, and neglects the positive and powerful reasons that African-Americans have for valuing education and motivating their children to achieve in school.

We need to ask, Perry says, what it is "that has historically sustained in African-Americans the desire to achieve in school, even when getting an education meant being a porter on a train or gaining a lifetime career in the post office."

She presents an epistemology of African-American schooling which shows that, "Within the African-American collective consciousness, school has always been seen as more than an instructional site; it has always been centrally implicated in larger social and political issues."

"The epistemology of schooling that appears over and over again in the African-American intellectual tradition," Perry says, "is one that links schooling to citizenship, leadership, and racial uplift."

From slavery to the present, Perry's historical review reveals, African-Americans have linked education to their struggle for citizenship and as a preparation for leadership. Further, she notes: "School has not been conceptualized as simply an instructional site, a place to acquire skills. Rather, school has been conceived of as an appropriate place for African-Americans to struggle for a redefinition of their social and political position in the larger society."

Implications for Parents, Communities, and Schools

For the African-American child to succeed in school," Perry concludes, "he or she has to negotiate... membership in the Black community as a racially discriminated group, membership in a Black cultural group, and membership in the mainstream society."

How can parents, communities, and schools help build and promote these memberships? Perry stresses the importance of "the extent to which the possibility of biculturality is assumed, ritualized, and institutionalized in the child's environments and experiences."

Thus parents must be willing to make explicit, discuss, and share their knowledge about helping African-American children develop these competencies at different developmental periods, Perry stresses. "It is important for families, community agencies, institutions, and schools to structure experiences where African-American children experience biculturality as necessary, possible, and normative."

"African-American families and their communities should shore up and create institutional and communal experiences and rituals that consciously motivate and provide a rationale for schooling broader than the job market," according to Perry.

She suggests a "re-energizing" of the traditional African-American emphasis that links schooling to racial uplift. Schools can encourage this by structuring assemblies and rituals "that are explicitly designed to develop and sustain effort optimism—each child's belief in the power and importance of schooling and intellectual work." In schools, the effort optimism of African-American children is very much determined by their current daily concrete experiences with racial and cultural discrimination.

"A child's belief in the power and importance of schooling and intellectual work," Perry says, "can be interrupted by the actions of teachers who explicitly or subtly convey a disbelief in the child's ability...." How the school views the child, and institutionalizes culture, and the child's experience of discrimination... are major determinants of whether an African-American child successfully negotiates multiple group memberships and succeeds in school or rejects the school as culturally oppositional."

"The culture of the school should be examined," Perry states. "School personnel should be willing to discuss the relationship of curriculum content and staffing patterns to racial identity development and ultimately to achievement."

If the society we want is a democracy predicated on a diversity of racial and ethnic origins, Perry says, "we have no choice but to reconstrue our schools as multiracial, multicultural democracies. Within this conception of school, cultural codes are not seen as oppositional, and acquiring fluency in many different cultural codes is a goal eminently worthy of pursuit." ■

CENTER ON FAMILIES,
COMMUNITIES, SCHOOLS
& CHILDREN'S LEARNING
REPORT

February 1992, No. 1

CURRENT RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

The Chinese–American Experience

Our reporting of the results of these studies begins with Sau-Fong Siu's literature review examining the Chinese-American experience and history in this country and the relationship of Chinese-American family and community behaviors, routines, values, and expectations to the educational achievement of Chinese-American children.

Siu's central premise is that some consistent cultural traditions and parenting values and practices promote and support the educational achievement of Chinese-American children. These factors, however, are only part of the story and are limited in their influence on educational achievement until and unless they interact with social and economic opportunity structures.

Culture, family structure, and parenting practices

The Chinese cultural values that are often cited to explain Chinese-Americans' success in school are usually those based on Confucianism and include respecting one's elders, a sense of family obligation, deferred gratification, hard work and discipline, and reverence for learning.

Valuing education is by no means a unique claim of Chinese-Americans, Siu notes—almost all immigrants recognize education as the way to a better life for their children. But Chinese-Americans tend "to define their cultural identity in terms of academic achievement."

After delivering an important reminder—*the typical Chinese-American family does not exist; the Chinese-American family is shaped by many forces*—Siu describes how Chinese cultural values generally translate into traditional Chinese parenting values and practices. In general, Chinese-American parents teach their children to value educational achievement above all other achievement, to respect authority, to feel a strong sense of responsibility for relatives, to blame oneself when failing to live up to parental expectations, and to learn self-control.

Research findings consistently show that Chinese-American parenting practices differ, on average, from those of other cultural groups in the United States, although the extent to which traditional values are adhered to in parenting practices varies according to the length of the family's stay in the United States and the degree of assimilation of the family into the dominant culture. Chinese parents, Siu summarizes, "tend to exercise more control over the members of the family, be more protective of children, emphasize more obedience to the parents, provide a higher proportion of enthusiastic positive feedback when teaching young children, value grades more than general cognitive achievement in children, evaluate more realistically a child's academic and personality characteristics, be less satisfied with a child's accomplishment, hold children to higher standards, and believe more in effort and less in innate ability than their American counterparts."

> *Much of the high educational achievement of current Chinese-Americans is due to immigration policies which favored more educated Chinese immigrants.*

In general, Chinese-American values and parenting practices produce a strong congruence between the Chinese parent-child relationship and the schools' teacher-pupil relationship. This congruence, Siu notes, "results in (a) the Chinese-American child being viewed positively by the teacher and (b) the child's ability to devote energy to learning rather than to coping with discontinuity and dissonance."

Values alone are not enough

As logical as it sounds that this scenario of congruence among cultural values, parenting values and practices, and American schools should produce high levels of Chinese-American educational achievement, Siu notes major gaps in this theory's explanatory power. For example, these factors can't explain the existence of the historically low levels of educational achievement of Chinese-Americans prior to World War II and similar low levels of the Chinese in general in China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. "Obviously," Siu concludes, "the values in themselves are necessary but not sufficient conditions for success."

Another caveat about how limited the parenting values and practices and cultural traditions may be for explaining school achievement comes from the fact that high socioeconomic status correlates with high achievement for Chinese-Americans just as it does with the achievement of all other Americans. Much of the high educational achievement of current Chinese-Americans is due to immigration policies which favored more educated Chinese immigrants. Siu points out, "Given the initial advantage of Asian-American immigrants in terms of education and skills, their offspring's educational attainments are to be expected."

Siu notes that research has identified two distinct groups of Chinese-Americans—those who are "entrepreneurs and professionals, both American-born and new immigrants, living outside of Chinatowns, enjoying higher incomes and having more education than the national average... [and who] tend to come from Taiwan and Hong Kong" and those who are "manual and service workers, more recent immigrants, speak little or no English, lack a high school diploma from the homeland, and live in Chinatowns."

Children in the first group tend to show high educational attainment. For example, of the nine Chinese-American finalists in the 1987 Westinghouse Science Talent Search, five were born in Taiwan or had parents who were from Taiwan and six had parents whose jobs were based on high levels of education, such as research scientist, college professor, or physician. Chinese-American children in the second group, however, do much less well in school. For example, 1980 census data showed that 71.4 percent of Chinese-Americans living in New York City's Chinatown had no high school diploma.

Thus the success story of Chinese-American educational achievement in this country, according to Siu, cannot be attributed solely to shared cultural and family values and practices. There's another essential element—the historical interaction of those cultural and family values and practices with social factors. A full understanding of the educational achievement of Chinese-Americans in the United States, according to Siu, requires a full examination of the events and traditions of the Chinese homeland, which illuminates the roots of those cultural values and practices that are conducive to school success, and a full examination of the history of the Chinese community in the United States and its interactions with mainstream American society.

Four historical periods relevant

Siu shows how Chinese-American families and communities adapted and coped with barriers posed by American society through four historical periods: the pre-exclusion era (from the beginning of Chinese immigration up to about 1880), the exclusion era (from 1882 to 1943), the period from the repeal of the exclusion law in 1943 to the Immigration and Nationality Act Amendments of 1965, and the period since 1965. Through these periods, different types of Chinese-American identity emerged (sojourner, assimilator, accommodator, the ethnically proud, and the uprooted). These identities influenced how Chinese-Americans perceived education and social advancement.

During the first two periods, Chinese-Americans in general suffered "privation, prejudice, discrimination, and harsh treatment," Siu notes. Because access to education was severely limited, the traditional respect for education among the Chinese-Americans did not lead to educational achievement.

During the third period, "a series of events in the homeland as well as in the United States... led to a less hostile attitude toward Chinese-Americans and to a wider opening in the American opportunity structure." Throughout these historical periods, Siu notes, "it is significant that Chinese-Americans have basically accorded legitimacy to the American public school and persisted in the belief that education is the key to success."

At the beginning of the fourth period, from 1965 to the present, the United States suddenly discovered that it had a "model minority" in its midst. Public officials and the mass media began noticing and reporting the high educational levels and professional and technical occupational accomplishments of Asian-Americans. The prevailing message was that here is a disadvantaged minority group that "has pulled itself up by the bootstraps without any government intervention.... in a relatively short time."

This prevailing message, which conveniently ignored changes in immigration policies and patterns as well as changes in the labor market, led to a commonly-held but dangerous generality—here is a model group that other minority groups should look to for inspiration and insight about how to succeed in America.

This is not an appropriate conclusion, according to Siu, whose review clearly shows that the Chinese-American historical experience and family and community characteristics are unique among minority groups. In fact, Siu states, "What helped immigrant minorities such as Chinese-Americans to succeed is absent in the collective experience of involuntary minorities such as African-Americans: coming voluntarily as laborers instead of slaves, a view that problems are only temporary, a generally optimistic attitude, a belief that things are better in the United States, acceptance of the folk theory of the White middle class, a different but not oppositional social identity, a trust in White institutions, a situation in which culture and language do not have to be given up to succeed."

Motivation to learn, however, will vary among minority groups and even within minority groups depending on their socio-political experiences and value contexts.

Siu identifies three issues on which the Chinese-American educational experience generates important questions about the education of all minorities: the importance of effort vs. innate ability for children's success in school, motivation to succeed in school, and types of parent involvement in the school.

The Chinese family culture emphasizes effort over innate ability as the key to educational achievement—an affirmation that, indeed, all children can learn. Motivation to learn, however, will vary among minority groups and even within minority groups depending on their socio-political experiences and value contexts. Finally, our common assumption is that active parent involvement in the school is vital to children's educational achievement, but the Chinese-American experience shows that parents do not have to be actively involved at the school building or participate in policy making in order to care deeply about their children's education and do a lot to encourage and monitor their children's progress at home.

Reference

Siu, Sau-Fong. "Toward an Understanding of Chinese-American Educational Achievement." Center on Families, Communities, Schools and Children's Learning, Report No. 2, 45 pages. ($5.40)

Adapted and Reprinted with Permission from: Cultural Backgrounds and Educational Issues: A Guide on Asian & Pacific Islander American Students by John Nobuya Tsuchida. Washington, D.C.: National Education Association, 1991

CHAPTER SIX

SOUTHEAST ASIANS

1. Demographic Information

For the purpose of this book, the term "Southeast Asians" refers to the natives of Vietnam, Cambodia (now called Kampuchea), and Laos, as well as their descendants in the United States. For the sake of consistency and clarity, "Cambodia" and "Cambodians" will be used in lieu of "Kampuchea" and "Kampucheans." Laotians, that is, the citizens of Laos, consist of two major ethnic groups: (1) Lao residing mainly in the lowlands, and (2) Hmong residing in the highlands. Although the Hmong may be further divided into several different tribal and linguistic subgroups, the term "Hmong" will be used to include all the highlanders of Laos.

As of 1990, there resided in this country 1,001,054 Southeast Asians. The Southeast Asian population was composed of the following four subgroups:[1]

1. Vietnamese	614,547	(61.4%)
2. Lao	149,014	(14.9%)
3. Cambodian	147,411	(14.7%)
4. Hmong	90,082	(9.0%)
Total	1,001,054	(100.0%)

The Vietnamese were by far the largest refugee group accounting for 61.4 percent of the Southeast Asian population. The Lao were a distant second, comprising only 14.9 percent of the total.

The federal government had initially made concerted efforts to disperse the entering Southeast Asian refugees across the country[2] to minimize the occurrence of racial incidents, as well as to make each state's contributions proportionate to its demographic size and financial resources. By 1990, however, over a half of the Southeast Asian population had gravitated to the western states. The western region accounted for 58 percent of Cambodians, 55 percent of Hmong, 54 percent of Vietnamese and 51 percent of Lao. More than 41 percent of the Hmong lived in the Midwest, particularly in Minnesota, whereas California alone had attracted 46 percent of all Vietnamese in the United States.[3] ……

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[1] U.S. Bureau of the Census, *United States Department of Commerce News* (June 12, 1991), Table 3A. Race and Hispanic Origin for the United States and Regions: 1990.

[2] Tricia Knoll, *Becoming Americans: Asian Sojourners, Immigrants, and Refugees in the Western United States* (Portland: Coast to Coast Books, 1982), p. 152.

[3] Bureau of the Census, *United States Department of Commerce News*, Table 3C. Race and Hispanic Origin for the United States and Regions: 1990; and Table 5B. Asian or Pacific Islander Persons by Group for the United States and States.

Between 1975 and 1979, a total of 292,315 Vietnamese refugees are known to have arrived by boat in countries of first asylum, such as Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Hong Kong, and the Philippines. It is estimated that 10 to 15 percent of the boat people perished at sea.[23] In addition to numerous shipwrecks and deaths caused by illness and starvation aboard the ships, roughly 30 percent of refugee vessels which had set sail from Southern Vietnam were attacked by pirates at sea. The pirates committed "rape, pillage and murder (RPM)"[24] against hapless and defenseless refugees. Many of the victims of "RPM" later suffered from severe psychological problems.[25] By the end of 1987, the United States admitted 417,492 Vietnamese.[26]

3. Current Socioeconomic Status

The Southeast Asian population in the United States increased dramatically in the 1980s due to a large-scale immigration of refugees from Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, many of whom came by way of the countries of first asylum. Consequently, the 1980 census data based on a much smaller number of Southeast Asian respondents no doubt fail to accurately illustrate the current socioeconomic status of Southeast Asians. In the absence of the socioecomonic data from the 1990 census, however, we still have to rely on the 1980 statistics.

Collectively speaking, Southeast Asians have substantially less formal education than the other Asian American groups. As of 1980, 62 percent of Vietnamese 25 years old and over had a high school education, compared to 43 percent for Cambodians, 31 percent for Lao, and 22 percent for Hmong. The four Southeast Asian groups all had considerably lower high school graduation rates than the total Asian and Pacific Islander American (APIA) population in the same age bracket, whose high school completion rate averaged 75 percent. In every refugee group, men were far more likely than women to have high school diplomas. The male-female difference in the high school graduation rate ranged from 11 percentage points for the Hmong to 18 percentage points for the Cambodians.[27] In Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, women generally had limited opportunities to pursue formal education.······

4. Educational Issues

Of all the Asian American children, Southeast Asian students probably are the most disadvantaged in their efforts to acquire an American education. There are certain unfavorable factors associated with their refugee backgrounds. First, unlike immigrants who usually come to the United States quite well prepared psychologically, educationally, and vocationally, Southeast Asian refugees normally arrive in their host country without much psychological, professional, or economic preparation, and under chaotic circumstances at that. Whereas the immigrants make conscious decisions to move to their adopted country, the refugees often go, without much personal property, to whichever country offers them asylum. Furthermore, refugees do not have the luxury of making adequate preparations before resettling in a new country. While immigration denotes planned and desired transplantation, the exodus of refugees implies a sudden, chaotic, and expedient move to their host country. Unprepared and undesired entry into the asylum country will naturally put refugee children at a great disadvantage in their quest for an American education.

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[23] *Ibid.*, pp. 80-81.

[24] *Ibid.*, p. 63, 65.

[25] *Ibid.*, p. 77.

[26] Immigration and Naturalization Service, *1987 Statistical Yearbook...*, pp. 3-4.

[27] Bureau of the Census, *We, the Asian and Pacific...*, p. 12.

Second, because many refugees have large extended families, it is often difficult for them to secure adequate housing at affordable prices.[33] As a result, multimember families, especially from Laos and Cambodia, live in crowded houses and apartments. Such a strained housing situation is by no means conducive to creating a productive educational environment at home. Devoid of such basic things as desks and chairs, many Southeast Asian children find it hard to concentrate on their homework in noisy, crowded houses. Furthermore some of the familial obligations and household chores--taking care of smaller siblings, and handling cooking, laundry, cleaning, and interpreting for their non-English-speaking relatives--sometimes keep them from devoting sufficient time and attention to their class assignments.

Third, large numbers of Southeast Asian parents, particularly fathers, have quickly lost their traditional position of authority at home. With little or no English proficiency or marketable skills, adult males were no longer able to perform their duties as their families' breadwinners. Dysfunctional in the highly technological host society, many male heads of Southeast Asian households became depressed over their helplessness and bleak future. A substantial but undetermined amount of marital problems ensued, resulting in some instances in domestic abuse, chemical dependency, suicide, and divorce. Such pains of resettlement in an alien culture naturally have affected not only the spousal relationship based on the patriarchal system, but also traditional parenting grounded upon filial piety.[34] Moreover, some refugee students who quickly developed better English skills than their parents began to show less deference to them on account of their inability to help with their children's homework, as well as of the parents' increasing dependence on their children to survive in the host country.

Fourth and last, Southeast Asian students do need effective bilingual or English as a Second Language (ESL) programs, depending on the pupils' grades, subject areas, and overall preparedness for integration into the American educational mainstream. However, such English programs should be language-specific, if at all possible, for the four major refugee groups represent different cultural backgrounds and needs. Generally speaking, Vietnamese children demonstrate the strongest academic prowess and adaptability of all the Southeast Asian groups. Although many Vietnamese students do well in science and mathematics, their English skills have much to be desired, particularly in reading and writing. Their verbal skills may belie their inability to read textbooks fast enough and to fully comprehend the contents due to their limited vocabulary and unfamiliarity with the concepts and subtle cultural nuances behind the words they are reading. In terms of writing skills, they need to improve their grammar, punctuation, and syntax.[35]

Hmong students present a much greater challenge to American teachers. They were abruptly transplanted from a preindustrial, preliterate society to a highly technological and industrialized consumer society. Few of the Hmong students' parents received formal education beyond elementary school in Laos. Lao students, on the other hand, generally come from stronger academic backgrounds in terms of their parents' educational attainment. However, the long interruption of the Lao children's education, due to their prolonged stay in Thai refugee camps, makes it extremely difficult for American teachers to place the pupils in appropriate courses and grades.

Finally, Cambodian children, the survivors of the genocide, need to overcome the effects of loss of their loved ones and of intellectuals in the Cambodian community who could have facilitated the students' integration into the educational mainstream of American society.

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[31] *Ibid.*, p. 13.

[32] *Ibid.*

[33] Vuong G. Thuy, "The Indochinese in America: Who Are They and How Are They Doing?", in Don T. Nakanishi and Marsha Hirano-Nakanishi (eds.), *The Education of Asian and Pacific Americans: Historical Perspectives and Prescriptions for the Future* (Phoenix: Oryx Press, 1983), p. 109.

[34] *Ibid.*, pp. 109-111.

[35] These findings were derived from the author's teaching experience at the University of Minnesota and from the results of the Minnesota Battery of English Language Proficiency Tests and the Michigan English Language Assessment Battery, which thousands of Southeast Asian students had taken at the University of Minneosta for admission and placement purposes.

ERIC CLEARINGHOUSE ON LANGUAGES AND LINGUISTICS

ERIC Digest

Parent Involvement and The Education of Limited-English-Proficient Students

Prepared by Carmen Simich-Dudgeon

December, 1986

Over the last two decades, there has been a growing body of research evidence suggesting that there are important benefits to be gained by elementary-age schoolchildren when their parents provide support, encouragement and direct instruction in the home, as well as maintain good communications[1] with the school--activities which are known as "parent involvement". Such findings have led researchers and school personnel to apply parent involvement techniques at higher grade levels and with limited-English-proficient and non-English-proficient (LEP/NEP) students as well. The results to date have been encouraging.

What Activities Constitute Parent Involvement?

In general, parents may become involved by:

- providing a home environment that supports children's learning needs;
- volunteering to provide assistance in the school as teachers' aides, secretaries, or in other roles;
- becoming activists and decision-makers in organizations such as the local PTA/PTO, or community advocacy groups that advise local school boards and school districts;
- attending school-sponsored activities;
- maintaining open channels of communication with the teacher(s) and continually monitoring children's progress in school;
- tutoring the children at home, using specific learning activities designed by the teacher to reinforce work being done in school (Epstein, 1986).

While most of the activities listed above are undertaken on the initiative of parents, the last activity--parent-as-tutor involvement--is, or should be, initiated by the teacher. Schools with newly-established parent involvement programs have noted that parents are willing to become involved, but that they do not know *how* to help their children with academic tasks at home, and in general, are fearful of doing more harm than good. To counteract this, the teacher must maintain contact with the parents, giving specific assistance with materials and tutoring techniques that will successfully reinforce the work being done in school (Simich, 1986; Epstein, 1985a).

Parent involvement in the education of high school students, on the other hand, requires that the parent become co-learner, facilitator and collaborator, a means of support as the high school-age student develops independence and explores future educational options.

What Are Some Special Aspects of LEP/NEP Parent Involvement?

For the growing numbers of limited- or non-English-proficient parents, parent involvement of any kind in the school process is a new cultural concept. Moreover, attempts by teachers and school officials to involve such parents in the education of their children is very often interpreted as a call for interference. The overwhelming majority of LEP/NEP parents believe that the school has not only the qualifications, but the responsibility to educate their children, and that any amount of parent "interference" is certain to be counter-productive. The most imporant task, then, in involving LEP/NEP parents in their children's education is to acculturate them to the meaning of parent involvement in their new social environment.

While most LEP/NEP parents do not have the English language proficiency to engage in many of the typical parent involvement activities, they may be very successfully involved in parent-school collaboration at home. These parents can be taught to reinforce educational concepts in the native language and/or English. Additionally, bilingual community liaisons should be available to bridge language and cultural differences between home and school. An added advantage, of course, is that LEP/NEP parents improve their own general knowledge, language and survival skills as a result of their participation in the program.

What Evidence Is There to Support The Need for Parent Involvement?

Epstein (1985b) has concluded, "the evidence is clear that parental encouragement, activities and interest at home, and parental participation in schools and classrooms positively influence achievement, even after the students' ability and family socioeconomic status are taken into account." Moreover, there may be evidence to support the conclusion that the most useful variety of parent involvment is the contact that parents have with their children in the home when such contact is used to encourage and aid school achievement. Significant findings from several parent involvement programs show that:

- Parent involvement in academic activities with children at home consistently and significantly improves parents' knowledge and expertise in helping their children, as well as their ability to effectively evaluate teachers' merits (Bennett, 1986);

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- Direct parental involvement at home with children's school work has positive effects on such things as school attendance, classroom behavior, and parent-teacher relations (Gillum, 1977; Rich et al., 1979; Comer, 1980);
- Students who are part of parent involvement programs show higher reading achievement than children who are not. Hewison and Tizard (1980) found that "children encouraged to read to their parents, and to talk with their parents about their reading, had markedly higher reading gains than children who did not have this opportunity." Moreover, small group instruction during the school day by highly competent specialists *did not produce* gains comparable to those obtained in parental involvement programs. Results of a longitudinal study of 300 3rd and 5th grade students in Baltimore City show that from fall to spring, students whose teachers were leaders in the use of parent involvement made greater gains in reading achievement than did students whose teachers were not recognized for encouraging parent involvement (Epstein, 1985b).

Do These Findings Apply to LEP/NEP Students?

In the study conducted by Hewison and Tizard mentioned above, several of the participating parents were non-English-proficient and/or illiterate, a condition that neither prevented the parents from collaborating with the school, nor the children from showing marked improvement in reading ability.

A more recent study, the three-year Trinity-Arlington Teacher and Parent Training for School Success Project, has shown the most comprehensive findings to date concerning parent involvement and limited-English proficiency. This project, the result of a collaboration between Trinity College in Washington, DC and the Arlington, VA Public Schools, was designed to facilitate the acquisition of English language skills by high school LEP students from four language backgrounds (Khmer, Lao, Spanish and Vietnamese) through the development of supportive relationships among the students, parents and school staff. The role of the parent-as-tutor was stressed and facilitated by community liaisons proficient in the native language of the parents. Parents were shown how to collaborate, to be co-learners with their high school-age children in the completion of specially-designed home lessons from the Vocationally-Oriented Bilingual Curriculum (VOBC), a supplement to the ESL program which was in use at the implementation site.

Several locally-developed and nationally-validated measures of English proficiency were administered to the students. Additionally, both parents and students were administered a content test to provide evidence of cultural knowledge gained as a result of the VOBC information exchanged between parent and student. The study showed positively that the VOBC home lessons reinforced ESL concepts and language skills taught to students during regular ESL classroom instruction. Significant gains were also recorded in the English language and survival skills of the parents; and, as a result of their collaboration on the VOBC home lessons, parents and students alike learned a great deal about life in America and about the American school system.

In many LEP/NEP households, parents worked two or three jobs and were often not available to work with their children on the VOBC home lessons. Likewise, many students were unaccompanied minors and/or heads of household, and did not have the luxury of parental involvement. Such cases highlighted another very important finding: in households where parents were not available to work with their children, interaction with guardians and siblings over the VOBC home lessons often provided the same positive reinforcement as when parents participated, possible evidence that home activities could be even more productive if the whole family were to be involved in their completion (Simich, 1986).

How Can School Districts Initiate An LEP/NEP Parent Involvement Program?

To develop a parent-as-tutor, collaborator or co-learner program, the collaboration of all school personnel is essential. Regular classroom teachers, ESL teachers, counselors, and administrators should receive training in how to develop better home and school collaboration with LEP/NEP parents and how to involve them in the education of their children. An essential component of the parent involvement effort is the bilingual community liaison, a highly respected member of the parents' language community who is knowledgeable about the American school system.

Information on the VOBC, Teacher's Guide to the VOBC, a training videotape to supplement the VOBC and other materials developed by the Trinity-Arlington Project may be obtained by writing the National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education, 11501 Georgia Avenue, Wheaton, MD 20907; (301)933-9448 or (800)647-0123.

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OERI
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
US Department of Education

This report was prepared with funding from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, under contract no. 400-86-0019. The opinions expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of OERI or ED.

STRATEGIES TO REACH AND INVOLVE PARENTS

- **Involving Parents in the Education of Their Children**
- **Involving At-Risk Families in Their Children's Education**
- **Building a Successful Parent Center in an Urban School**
- **Description of a Parent Center**
- **The Little Things Make a Big Difference**

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ERIC Digest

EDO-PS-89-3

Involving Parents in the Education of Their Children

Patricia Clark Brown

When parents are involved in their children's education, both children and parents are likely to benefit. Researchers report that parent participation in their children's schooling frequently:

- enhances children's self-esteem
- improves children's academic achievement
- improves parent-child relationships
- helps parents develop positive attitudes towards school and a better understanding of the schooling process.

Despite these advantages, it is not always easy for parents to find time and energy to become involved or to coordinate with schedules for school events. For some parents, a visit to school is perceived as an uncomfortable experience, perhaps a holdover from their own school days. Others may have their hands full with a job and other children. The availability and cost of babysitters are other factors. Recently, teachers and other school staff have made special efforts to increase communication with parents and encourage involvement in children's learning experiences.

Ways to Involve Parents

One kind of parental involvement is school-based and includes participating in parent-teacher conferences and functions, and receiving and responding to written communications from the teacher. Parents can also serve as school volunteers for the library or lunchroom, or as classroom aides. In one survey, almost all teachers reported talking with children's parents—either in person, by phone, or on open school nights—and sending notices home (Becker & Epstein, 1982). These methods, along with requests for parents to review and sign homework, were most frequently used to involve parents.

Parents can participate in their children's schools by joining Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) or Parent Teacher Organizations (PTOs) and getting involved in decision-making about the educational services their children receive. Almost all schools have a PTA or PTO, but often only a small number of parents are active in these groups.

Another kind of involvement is home-based and focuses on activities that parents can do with their children at home or on the teacher's visits to the child's home. However, few teachers involve parents through home-based activities, partly because of the amount of time involved in developing activities or visiting and partly because of the difficulty of coordinating parents' and teachers' schedules.

Ways to Reach Parents

Some programs aim to reach parents who do not usually participate in their children's education. Such programs provide flexible scheduling for school events and parent-teacher conferences, inform parents about what their children are learning, and help parents create a supportive environment for children's learning at home.

Many schools have responded to the needs of working parents by scheduling conferences in the evening as well as during the day, and by scheduling school events at different times of the day throughout the year.

It is important for teachers to keep the lines of communication open. This involves not only sending regular newsletters and notes, but also obtaining information from parents. Phone calls are a greatly under-used technique for keeping in touch. A teacher usually calls a parent to report a child's inappropriate behavior or academic failure. But teachers can use phone calls to let parents know about positive behavior and to get input. Parents justifiably become defensive if they think that every phone call will bring a bad report. If teachers accustom parents to receiving regular calls just for keeping in touch, it is easier to discuss problems when they occur.

Teachers need to consider families' lifestyles and cultural backgrounds when planning home activities. However, some activities can be adapted to almost any home situation. These are activities that parents or children engage in on a day-to-day basis. Teachers can encourage parents and children to do these activities together, and can focus on the opportunities that the activities provide for learning. For example, although television viewing is a pastime for most children and adults, they do not often watch shows together. Teachers can suggest appropiate programs and send home questions for families to discuss. This discussion can be carried over into class.

Busy parents can include children in such everyday activities as preparing a meal or grocery shopping. Teachers can also suggest that parents set aside a time each day to talk with their children about school. Parents may find this difficult if they have little idea of what occurs in school. Notes on what the children have been working on are helpful. Parents and children can discuss current events using teacher-provided questions. Teachers often suggest the activity of reading aloud to children. Reading to children is an important factor in increasing their interest and ability in reading. Teachers can also encourage children to read to parents. In areas where children may not have many books, schools can lend books, and teachers can provide questions for parents and children to discuss.

Home activities allow parents flexibility in scheduling, provide opportunities for parents and children to spend time together, and offer a relaxed setting. To be most beneficial, home activities should be interesting and meaningful—not trivial tasks that parents and children have to "get through." When teachers plan home activities, they often think in terms of worksheets or homework that will reinforce skills learned in school. But parents often grow tired of the endless stream of papers to be checked and the time spent on "busywork." Another danger of promoting home activities is the possibility that there may arise an unclear distinction of roles, with teachers expecting parents to "teach" at home. Teachers and parents need to understand that their roles are different, and that their activities with children should be different.

Difficulties in Involving Parents

All teachers experience the frustration of trying to involve parents and getting little response. Teachers complain that parents do not come to conferences or school open houses, check homework, or answer notes. This leads some teachers to conclude that parents do not care about their children's education. While it is true that the emotional problems of a few parents may be so great as to prevent them from becoming involved with their children's education, most parents do care a great deal. This caring is not, however, always evidenced by parent attendance at school events. There are a number of reasons why these parents may not become involved, and teachers need to consider these before dismissing parents as uninterested.

For many parents, a major impediment to becoming involved is lack of time. Working parents are often unable to attend school events during the day. In addition, evenings are the only time these parents have to spend with their children, and they may choose to spend time with their family rather than attend meetings at school.

For many apparently uninvolved parents school was not a positive experience and they feel inadequate in a school setting. Parents may also feel uneasy if their cultural style or socioeconomic level differ from those of teachers (Greenberg, 1989). Some parents who are uninvolved in school may not understand the importance of parent involvement or may think they do not have the skills to be able to help. Even parents who are confident and willing to help may hesitate to become involved for fear of overstepping their bounds. It is the responsibility of teachers and administrators to encourage such parents to become involved.

Conclusion

The suggestions offered in this digest can help teachers involve parents who might not otherwise be involved. While it is possible for a teacher to implement such a parent involvement program alone, it is much easier if the school as a whole is committed to the program. Administrative staff can relieve some of the burden of implementing a comprehensive parent involvement program, and can offer help and support to teachers.

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This publication was funded by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education. Opinions expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of OERI.

ERIC Clearinghouse
on Educational Management

ERIC Digest Series
Number EA 58 • 1991

INVOLVING AT-RISK FAMILIES IN THEIR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

By Lynn Balster Liontos

"I never see the parents I need to see," more than one teacher has complained. These are the parents of children at risk—at risk of failing, of dropping out, of having what in today's world accounts to no future at all.

The benefits to children whose parents are involved in the educational process are well-known: substantial research links family involvement to both academic and social success of children at school. Of all youth, at-risk children, whose numbers are increasing, have the most to gain from parent involvement. Consequently, schools need to find ways to reach at-risk families.

Who Is at Risk?

Most children are "at risk" at some time or another. James Comer states that "given increasing divorce rates, the growing numbers of single parent families and families in which both parents work, and the general complexity of modern life, even children of well-educated, middle-class parents can come to school unprepared because of the stress their families are undergoing." (quoted by Lynn Olson 1990)

Certain children, however, are in critical need of social intervention. These are generally the children who have traditionally been termed "at-risk." They are usually poor minorities often from other cultural backgrounds.

Why Is Parent Involvement Especially Important for At-Risk Children?

The main reason parental involvement with the schools is so important for at-risk children is that their home and school worlds are so different. "The predictable consequence in such situations is that children usually embrace the familiar home culture and reject the unfamiliar school culture, including its academic components and goals," says Muriel Hamilton-Lee (1988).

Suzanne Ziegler (1987) suggests it may be particularly important for teachers to develop communication with parents of at-risk children so that both understand the others' settings and expectations which may alter both settings. That is, school can become more home-like and home can have a school component. Or, as Joyce Epstein (1987) points out, family-like schools make students feel part of a "school family," where they receive individual attention which improves motivation.

Why Haven't Schools Been Reaching At-Risk Parents?

Traditional methods of parental involvement do not work with at-risk parents. In addition, the history of relationships between poor and minority parents and schools has been very different than those of the middle class. Barriers and misperceptions that exist for both parents and schools include:

Parents. At-risk parents may have feelings of inadequacy, failure, and poor self-worth, as well as negative experience with schools. Other cultures, as well as many low-income parents in general, see schools as institutionalized authority and, therefore, leave it to the teachers to educate their children. Additionally, there are economic, emotional, and time constraints (some families are struggling just to survive) and logistical problems such as lack of child care, transportation, and scheduling conflicts. In cultural minority families, involving parents can be further complicated by language barriers.

Teachers and Schools. Teacher attitudes play a large part in the academic success of at-risk children. Teachers who have low expectations for at-risk children, or who believe that at-risk parents don't care about their children and don't want to be involved in their education may contribute to childrens' failure. Teachers also may feel uncertain about how to maintain their role as experts while still involving parents.

According to Diana T. Slaughter and Valerie Shahariw Kuehne (1988), schools tend to see the parental role as traditional and perhaps passive and home-based, whereas many parents are interested in more active roles. Schools are often guilty of not taking the initiative to ask parents for help, and of not welcoming their participation. Finally, schools often organize events for their own convenience and pay little attention to the needs of at-risk parents.

What Can Be Done about These Obstacles?

Schools should consider adopting new beliefs and premises, based largely on the work of Rhoda Becher (Ziegler), Don Davies (1989), and Jean Krasnow (1990):

1. Successful at-risk programs begin with the premise that it's not any single person's or group's fault that a child or group of children is not learning; nor is it the school's fault. We are all responsible and dependent on each other.

2. All families have strengths. Successful programs emphasize them and let parents know these strengths are valued. This also means it isn't helpful to view at-risk families as deficients or as failures.

3. Most parents really care about their children. Successful programs acknowledge and express this. Studies of poor and minority parents in Maryland, New England, and the Southwest, for instance, have found that parents care deeply about their children's education but may not know how to help. (M. Sandra Reeves 1988)

4. Parents can learn new techniques. Successful programs help parents identify what they're capable of doing and how to overcome obstacles. One way to do this is by teaching them new skills and behaviors, such as helping their children through home learning.

5. Cultural differences are both valid and valuable. Successful programs learn about other cultures and respect their

beliefs. They find ways of building on the loyalty and obedience, for example, that Hispanic parents instill in their children.

6. Many family forms exist and are legitimate. Successful programs involve stepparents or even grandparents, and provide family support where resources are limited.

7. All individuals and families need to feel empowered, especially at-risk families who often feel powerless and out of control. Successful programs ask parents what they'd be interested in doing and work with *their* agendas first. Some also train at-risk parents to be part of their school's decision-making groups.

8. Partnership with at-risk families is impossible without collaboration with other community agencies. Schools cannot provide all the services that at-risk families need, such as parenting education, counseling, health care, and housing. The school staff also needs to function in a collaborative way with each other for real change to occur.

How Do I Begin a Program for Working with At-Risk Families?

The Hispanic Policy Development Project's publication (Siobhan Nicolau and Carmen Lydia Ramos 1990) offers guidelines, based on successful projects, that are useful for most at-risk groups:

•Be sure you're totally committed; half-hearted attempts do not accomplish much. There must be active support by the principal and staff. All the Hispanic projects that lacked the support of teachers and principals failed to increase parent involvement.

•Assign a project coordinator—someone who understands the culture and background of the parents and is sincerely dedicated. Give the coordinator time to do the job. Nicolau and Ramos found that leadership was the single most important element in launching a successful program with Hispanic parents.

•Be prepared to be innovative and flexible. The Hispanic projects that failed were those where new techniques were not tried, or where things were done "the way we have always done it."

•Use strong, personal outreach. "The personal approach," say Nicolau and Ramos, "which means talking face to face with the parents, in their primary language, at their homes, or at the school...was the strategy deemed most effective by 98 percent of the project coordinators." Home visits are a must.

•Make your first event fun. Start with something social as an icebreaker. Not every event can be a party, and Nicolau and Ramos offer suggestions for how to sustain involvement once you've gotten it started.

•Do not hold your first activity at school. Events may be more successful on neutral turf such as neighborhood homes or community places.

•Pay attention to environment and format. Informal settings are less intimidating to low- income parents. Make them as participatory as possible. A warm, nonjudgmental atmosphere is mandatory.

•Prepare staff with in-service workshops so that everyone understands the community being served. Include everyone; you don't want a less than welcoming secretary to spoil all the work you've done.

•Do not view child care, transportation, interpreters, and meals as frills. Providing them will make a big difference for at-risk parents.

•Choose different times to schedule events. Do it with consideration for the parents' availability.

•Do not give up if the initial response isn't overwhelming. Under the best circumstances, it takes time.

"Keep up the effort," Nicolau and Ramos conclude, "and one day you will find that you can't keep the parents away."

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A Product of the ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management
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This publication was prepared with funding from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, under contract No. OERI R188062004. The ideas and opinions expressed in this Digest do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of OERI, ED, or the Clearinghouse. This Digest is in the public domain and may be freely reproduced.

ERIC CLEARINGHOUSE ON URBAN EDUCATION

DIGEST

Number 90, May 1993 EDO-UD-93-4 ISSN 0889 8049

BUILDING A SUCCESSFUL PARENT CENTER IN AN URBAN SCHOOL

Introduction

Many teachers and administrators, particularly in urban schools, believe that parents do not care about their children's schooling. Conversely, many parents believe that school professionals are arrogant and unhelpful. These barriers of misunderstanding and mistrust persist because parents and educators do not know each other and do not work together. The solution is to have more parents in the schools, not just as visitors but rather as participants: "The tone and content of school conversations about parents and their communities change when parents are physically present in the building. It is difficult for school employees to say, 'The parents just don't care,' when caring parents can be seen daily" (Davies, 1991).

Thus, many Federal and local programs to improve the achievement of urban and disadvantaged students mandate and fund a parent involvement component. One type of parent participation program—the operation of a parent center in the school—has been especially successful. This digest presents the principles and practices of vital and ongoing centers so that arents and staff can use them when developing their own nter.

Models for Building a Center

A successful center begins with the adoption of a model, or philosophy, to guide parents and staff. In her comparison of home-school collaboration philosophies, Swap (1990) describes three models: (1) school to home transmission, (2) partnership for school success, and (3) interactive learning. The school to home transmission model is one-sided; parents receive information from the school but have little opportunity to provide information or contribute anything else. The partnership for school success model is too ambitious for many urban schools; parents are required to become full partners in governing the school, and, often, poor parents have too little time and too many hardships to concentrate on their children's schooling. This model also requires enormous time and effort from school staff.

The interactive learning model, on the other hand, does not demand too much from either the parents or the school. It does ask parents to draw upon their diverse cultures and to contribute some time and talent to enrich their children's education. It asks planners to "incorporate the views, values, history, and learning styles of minority families into the fabric of the school and curriculum," and "to support increased achievement of minority children in the school" (Swap, 1990).

Interactive Learning Model Principles for Planning a Center

The four principles governing a parent center using the interactive learning model are discussed below:

. Parents Have Their Own Place

Parents Plan Their Center. Parents need a place in the school, and the school needs them there. A center of their own, designed by the parents themselves, with the help of the school staff, provides the best way for parents to feel truly welcome at school. In planning the center, parents and school staff should consider the following:

- what their families need from the center, and what the families can contribute to support it;
- how families feel toward the school, and how school staff feels and acts toward them;
- what resources are available in the school and community;
- what the obstacles are and how to overcome them; and
- what realistic goals should be set.

Usually, the parents' next major task is to hold their first large parents' meeting. They might meet in a parent's home, a church, or a community center if they do not yet feel comfortable in the school.

Personal Contact Is a Must. Especially at the start of a center, parents and school staff must recruit other parents by talking face-to-face with them, even by visiting their homes (D'Angelo & Adler, 1991). No other communication is nearly as persuasive—neither signs, mailed invitations, nor telephone calls.

Parents Lead and Set Priorities. School staff might start the recruitment, but parents must take the lead soon. Moreover, parents should set the priorities for center activities. At the start of one center in an elementary school, for example, parents wanted to tackle the threats of teenage pregnancy and AIDS, even though the staff was more concerned with parents' reading to their children. Center planners first addressed the parents' concerns and then the staff's, which meant that the parents controlled their own agenda. Usually, however, parents and staff agree. For example, many parents at two centers wanted to speak and read English better in order to help their children with schoolwork and to participate in school activities. So, they set up English as a Second Language classes for themselves (Heleen, 1990).

Parents Staff Their Center. A center that is a place for parents should also be staffed by parents. In some schools, parents are hired as center coordinators (Davies, 1991). Their salaries and other expenses are paid by Chapter 1 and/or other supplemental funds. They host other parents who visit, recruit volunteers, track down parents of sick children, organize center activities, and make all-important home visits. They are joined by parent volunteers who work in the center and classrooms, and escort classes on field trips.

2. Everyone Learns from Everyone Else

The Unreachable Are Reachable. For an urban school center to succeed, its organizers must enlist all parents, and enlist them as both teachers and learners. Too often, educators regard poor parents as unreachable. For many poor parents, it is schools that are unreachable. Nevertheless, many fathers, teenage mothers, and seriously troubled families are difficult, if not impossible, to recruit and retain. To have the best chance at recruiting and engaging members, a center should use a variety of methods and activities.

A Boston center reaches fathers, grandfathers, and uncles with Fathers' Breakfasts. With these Breakfasts, mothers acknowledge the importance of the males' care for their children (Johnson, 1990). The same center also invites fathers to work with other fathers on carpentry projects. Another center reaches teenage mothers by appealing to *their* mothers, and offering small useful gifts to teenagers who attend parenting workshops. At the insistence of their mothers, some daughters attend in order to claim the gifts. Yet another center reaches at-risk families with home visits and counseling by social agencies (Nicolau & Ramos, 1990).

Their Children Are the Attraction of the Center. Though the center is for parents, their children are the reason that parents are there. Therefore, the children should be present in spirit and sometimes in person. First, a center should recognize students' achievements. In one school, teachers personally invite parents to view their children's prize works exhibited at the center. In another, students and their parents attend center award dinners (Heleen, 1990). Second, a center can help students directly. Children come to one center after school for tutoring by parent volunteers, preferring the center to their empty houses or the streets. The program has gotten so popular that some teachers now stay late to tutor (Nicolau & Ramos, 1990).

Parents Interact with Staff. The center should be a place where parents interact with school staff: the "key to [parent] involvement may not be with the families per se but may depend on the professionals' commitment to enhance the collaborative relationship with the family" (Correa, 1989).

In one school, students, parents, and teachers set goals together and sign learning contracts. These contracts are signed and executed at a parent center, a less intimidating place than at teachers' desks. Reflecting the core idea of the interactive model, a center can hold discussions for staff to learn parents' cultures and for parents to learn the school's goals and programs. Finally, in one school, teachers and parents form teams to resolve conflicts between families and the school (Davies, 1991).

3. The Parent Center Is Essential to the School's Operation

A Center Takes over Business with Parents. To become an integral part of a school, a parent center should: (1) take over much of the school's dealings with parents, (2) create and distribute vital information, and (3) receive adequate resources to accomplish (1) and (2). By assuming most parent business, the center lessens congestion in the school office and treats parents with patience and respect.

If the center is near school offices, it can supply family information easily and give parents and the principal access to each other. It must have files and equipment, particularly a telephone (Davies, 1991). It especially needs a coordinator who relates well to parents and devotes much time to establishing the center.

A Center Distributes Good News. A successful center conveys information both ways that parents and the school need for their respective jobs. One center provides students with bags for taking home books and urges parents to read aloud to their children. As Johnson (1990) points out, the book bags are more good news that the center accentuates. Too often, urban parents hear only bad news from school. In addition to good news, they need information about their children's schoolwork and even a place to practice their tutoring skills, which are functions of a parent center (D'Angelo & Adler, 1991). Conversely, the center gathers information about families that helps the educators.

4. The Center Is Accessible and Hospitable

Accessibility. The center should be open when parents can come to it. In one school, staff and volunteers are there before and after school, as well as during the day, to greet parents. Its activities are scheduled when parents can attend, in the evenings after mealtime. Also, parents more likely to attend center activities when daycare and recreation for older children are provided (Nicolau & Ramos).

Hospitality. The center should be a place where parents feel at home and enjoy themselves, even as they learn. Not every activity can be a party, but neither should serious business drive parents away. Activities should be a mixture of business and fun. As for the center itself, it can be furnished comfortably with adult furniture, perhaps donated or solicited by parents. It can also be remodeled and decorated by parents. And, the center can offer refreshments, however small. When parents drink coffee with other parents and staff, and share information about how they can help their children, then the center is a success.

— **Larry Yates**

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ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education, Institute for Urban and Minority Education, Box 40, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, NY 10027, (212) 678-3433. Erwin Flaxman, Director. Wendy Schwartz, Managing Editor.

This Digest was developed by the ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education with funding from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, under contract no. R188062013. The opinions expressed in this Digest do not necessarily reflect the position or policies of OERI or the Department of Education.

Description of a Parent Center

Washington Elementary District, Phoenix, Arizona

The Parent Center is housed in a vacant classroom at Sahuaro Elementary School, and is used by parents from throughout the district. Washington Elementary District serves students from diverse backgrounds and community, economically and ethnically. Financial support comes from federal Chapter I, state K-3 At Risk , and local Community Education funds. The Director is a certified teacher trained in parenting skills; however, not all staff members are certified teachers.

The classroom set-up reflects the variety of activities which occur in the Parent Center. One area is designed as a children's play area including homemaking and science/creative activities. Another portion of the room is set aside for workshops and meetings with parents. Bookshelves with resource books available for checkout to parents, and a toy lending library for children line the walls. There is also a children's library. At the hospitality area, refreshments are available for parents who drop in. The room set-up provides an environment where the children can play without adult intervention, thus allowing parents to interact freely with the Director. Child care is provided during parenting classes. can talk with the Center staff or teachers without interruption.

Among the activities provided by the Parent Center are:

- Parent discussion group on various topics weekly.
- "Parents as Partners in Reading" Workshop--parents and children attend a 1 1/2 hour session together.
- Newsletter sent to parents once a month.
- Active Parenting classes.
- Special interest parent classes monthly--example: How to Develop Responsibility in Children

The Parent Center is publicized through school newsletters and parent-teacher conferences. At the time of school dismissal, the greatest number of parents visit the center.

This site based model is now being replicated in other schools in the district. Many visitors have expressed interest in developing this as a way to increase parent involvement.

Becky Cairo
Director, Parenting Center

The Little Things Make a Big Difference

How to help your children succeed in school

National Association
of Elementary
School Principals
and
World Book
Educational Products

FACT SHEET

New Video Shows Parents How "The Little Things Make A Big Difference"

As children head back to school, many parents are looking for ways to help their children improve their school performance. The answers are as close as the local Blockbuster video store, where an important new video is available for free rental.

Title:	"The Little Things Make A Big Difference"
Background:	Seeing an acute need for parent resources on specific ways to help their children succeed in school, the National Association of Elementary School Principals and World Book Educational Products developed this video and a companion booklet. They are based on a survey of nearly 10,000 elementary and middle school principals in the U.S. and Canada.
Content:	The video and booklet take parents through the six critical areas for improving their children's school performance: -- Reinforcing self-esteem -- Developing good work habits -- Supporting academics -- Participating in stimulating activities -- Emphasizing language development -- Maintaining high, but realistic, academic expectations
Format:	The 16-minute video speaks directly to parents, detailing how each area influences children's learning and giving specific tips and ideas to help. Parents also hear from real children who tell how their parents fare.

-more-

PUB 4683 Printed in U.S.A 10/90

Uses: The video and booklet were developed to be used by parents at home and by principals, teachers and parents in PTA and other meetings and conferences at school.

Availability: The videotape is available for free rental from all 1,700 Blockbuster video stores.

The tape and multiple copies of the booklet are also available to principals and PTA groups for purchase from the National Association of Elementary School Principals. The tape is $19.95 (25% discount for NAESP and PTA members) and booklets are 25¢ each (minimum of 25, 25% discount applies). For an order form write to:

The National Association of Elementary School Principals
Educational Products
1615 Duke Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

Parents who want a free copy of the brochure should write:

World Book Educational Products
Station 9/NAESP
101 Northwest Point Boulevard
Elk Grove Village, IL 60007
(Please enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope)
or call 1-800-621-8202

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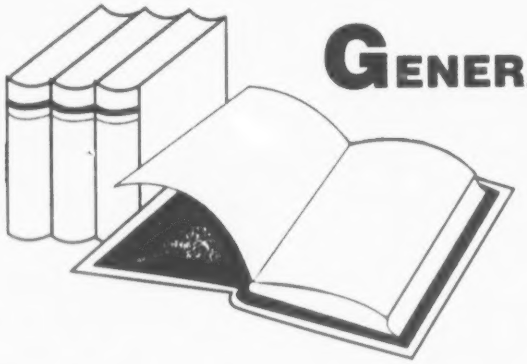


GENERAL READING LIST

The following titles cover a range of issues regarding parent involvement. Many of these titles are free; others are available for a fee. To order, contact the agencies listed.

Becoming a Nation of Readers: What Parents Can Do

U.S. Department of Education, 1988

This booklet (Item 447X) lists ideas and sources of information for home activities, based on research, that will improve reading achievement. It also describes what parents should look for in their children's school programs. ($.50). Consumer Information Center, Pueblo, CO 81009.

Beyond the Bake Sale: An Educator's Guide to Working With Parents

Anne Henderson, Carl Marburger, and Theodora Ooms, 1985

Parent involvement experts show how to build parent–school partnerships that go beyond fund-raising and boosterism to involve parents in important aspects of their child's schooling. The guide includes advice on how to involve single, low-income, and working parents. ($8.95). National Committee for Citizens in Education, 10840 Little Patuxent Parkway, Suite 301, Columbia, MD 21044.

Choosing a School for Your Child

U.S. Department of Education, 1989

This booklet (Item 471X) describes the kinds of schools that may be available in your district and presents suggestions and a checklist to help parents evaluate schools. It includes information on how to transfer from one school district to another and a list of additional resources. Also available in Spanish; see entry under *Cómo Escoger una Escuela para su Hijo.* ($.50). Consumer Information Center, Pueblo, CO 81009.

Communicating With Culturally Diverse Parents of Exceptional Children

ERIC Clearinghouse on Handicapped and Gifted Children, 1991

This *ERIC Digest* (E 497) offers educators of exceptional children insights into the perspectives, communication styles, values, and beliefs of culturally diverse parents. Includes guidelines for providing parents with information and support. (Free). ERIC Clearinghouse on Handicapped and Gifted Children, Council for Exceptional Children, 1920 Association Drive, Reston, VA 22091–1589.

Communicating With Parents

Janet Chrispeels, Marcia Boruta, and Mary Daugherty, 1988

This 300-page volume explores the many ways that schools communicate with parents and gain parent support and involvement. Topics include school newsletters and handbooks, homework, volunteers, progress reports, contracts, home visits, and telephone tips. Both schoolwide and classroom strategies for various grade levels are provided. ($28.00). San Diego County Office of Education, 6401 Linda Vista Road, Room 407, San Diego, CA 92111–7399.

Cómo Escoger una Escuela para su Hijo

Departamento de Educación de los Estados Unidos, 1991

Aunque al presente se está considerando un número de acciones legislativas sobre la cuestión de la selección de escuelas, existen opciones para sus hijos ahora mismo. *Cómo Escoger una Escuela para su Hijo* le ayudar a encarar esas opciones, a hacer las preguntas correctas y a tomar sus decisiones. Se ofrecen ejemplares gratuitos en español de *Cómo Escoger una Escuela para su Hijo.*

(From The ERIC Review. Vol I, Issue 3, Sept. 1991)

Para obtener un ejemplar gratuito, envíe su nombre y dirección a: National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education, 1118 22nd Street NW, Washington, DC 20037.

The Evidence Continues To Grow: Parent Involvement Improves Student Achievement
Anne Henderson, 1987

The research points to the benefits of including parents in school programs, encouraging parents to monitor children's schoolwork at home, and calling parents in to help when children are failing. This publication summarizes 49 studies and analyzes major conclusions. ($10.00). National Committee for Citizens in Education, 10840 Little Patuxent Parkway, Suite 301, Columbia, MD 21044.

Families and Early Childhood Programs
Douglas R. Powell, 1989

This publication (#142) reviews information on relations between families and early childhood programs and on the operation and effectiveness of parent education and support programs. It includes research and theoretical perspectives as well as promising directions for program practices. ($6.00). NAEYC Publications, 1834 Connecticut Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20009–5786.

Family Support, Education, and Involvement: A Guide for State Action
Council of Chief State School Officers, 1989

The guide presents discussions and research on the benefits of family support, education, and involvement programs; identifies state strategies, actions, and programs to encourage implementation of such programs in schools with significant concentrations of students at risk; and lists resources and organizations that provide leadership in these areas. ($10.00). Council of Chief State School Officers, 400 North Capitol Street NW, Washington, DC 20001–1511.

The Forgotten Factor in School Success: The Family. A Policymaker's Guide
Dorothy Rich, 1985

This guide describes specific programs, policies, and low-cost methods to support the educational role of the family and mobilize schools and families to work together in educational partnerships. ($5.00). Home and School Institute, 1201 16th Street NW, Washington, DC 20036.

Help Your Child Become a Good Reader
U.S. Department of Education, 1985

This pamphlet (Item 449X) describes more than a dozen activities that will make your children successful readers and discusses important factors that influence success and interest in reading. Tips for teaching reading fundamentals are based on everyday occurrences and household items. ($.50). Consumer Information Center, Pueblo, CO 81009.

Help Your Child Do Better in School
U.S. Department of Education, 1985

This pamphlet (Item 450X) provides tips for adults to help children in all grades improve their study skills. Addresses such concerns as attention, motivation, and study habits. ($.50). Consumer Information Center, Pueblo, CO 81009.

Help Your Child Improve in Test-Taking
U.S. Department of Education, 1985

This pamphlet (Item 451X) offers simple techniques to help children at all grade levels avoid "test anxiety" and prepare for teacher-made and standardized tests. Includes some advice for parents as well as suggestions for followup after the test. ($.50). Consumer Information Center, Pueblo, CO 81009.

Help Your Child Learn Math
U.S. Department of Education, 1985

This pamphlet (Item 452X) contains suggestions for helping children in grades 1–3 connect their real-life experiences with the math skills of counting, estimating, and measuring. Includes guidance on how to correct children's mistakes and build their knowledge and confidence. ($.50). Consumer Information Center, Pueblo, CO 81009.

Help Your Child Learn To Write Well
U.S. Department of Education, 1985

This pamphlet (Item 453X) suggests simple strategies for adults to help encourage children to express their ideas through writing. Covers the writing process and outlines enjoyable activities for kids to try. ($.50). Consumer Information Center, Pueblo, CO 81009.

GENERAL READING LIST (continued)

Helping Your Child Learn Geography
U.S. Department of Education, 1991

This booklet (Item 454X) is designed to teach children the fundamentals of geography in a format that is challenging and fun. It includes a fold-out, outline map of the United States to test children's newfound knowledge. ($.50). Consumer Information Center, Pueblo, CO 81009.

Helping Your Child Learn Science
U.S. Department of Education, 1991

This booklet (Item 611X) suggests ways for parents to interest children from ages 3 to 10 in science. It includes a sampling of family activities, tips on encouraging schools to develop good science programs, and recommended books and materials. (Free). Consumer Information Center, Pueblo, CO 81009.

Helping Your Child Use the Library
U.S. Department of Education, 1989

This booklet (Item 455X) explains how parents can introduce children to the library. It discusses programs and activities for children of all ages and for those with special needs. ($.50). Consumer Information Center, Pueblo, CO 81009.

How Can Parents Get More Out of School Meetings?
Educational Resources Information Center, 1989

This pamphlet offers suggestions to help both parents and teachers make parent–teacher conferences more productive. (Free). ACCESS ERIC, 1600 Research Boulevard, Rockville, MD 20850.

Improving Schools and Empowering Parents: Choice in American Education
U.S. Department of Education, 1989

This report describes a White House workshop on choice in education; the possibilities of implementing choice; and benefits for schools and parents when programs of choice are carefully planned, developed, and monitored. (Free). Education Information Branch, U.S. Department of Education, 555 New Jersey Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20208–5641.

Increasing Parental Involvement as a Means of Improving Our Nation's Schools
Evelyn K. Moore, Black Child Development Institute, Inc., 1990

This publication focuses on approaches to meaningful parent involvement, the need for innovation in family–school relationships, and barriers that impede parent involvement. It describes model programs and includes suggestions for creating cooperative and understanding home–school relationships. A parent resource guide is included, describing 18 experiences that promote children's development and help prepare them for school. (ED 325 232, $6.24). ERIC Document Reproduction Service, 7420 Fullerton Road, Suite 110, Springfield, VA 22153–2852.

Involving At-Risk Families in Their Children's Education
Lynn Balster Liontos, 1991

This *ERIC Digest* discusses, in a question-and-answer format, who is at risk, why at-risk students especially need their parents to be involved in their education, why schools have not been successful in reaching these parents, and what schools and educators can do. ($2.50). Publication Sales, ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management, University of Oregon, 1787 Agate Street NW, Eugene, OR 97403–5207.

Involving the Families of At-Risk Youth in the Educational Process
Lynn Balster Liontos, 1991

This publication presents background information educators need to know if they want to involve families who are poor, nonwhite, or speak a language other than English. It explores barriers that stand in the way of reaching at-risk families and proposes ways of overcoming these barriers. ($6.00). Publication Sales, ERIC

(From The ERIC Review, Vol. I, Issue 3, Sept. 1991)

Clearinghouse on Educational Management, University of Oregon, 1787 Agate Street NW, Eugene, OR 97403–5207.

Involving Parents in the Education of Their Children
Patricia Clark Brown, 1989

This *ERIC Digest* discusses ways to involve parents in the education of their children, methods for reaching them, and barriers to overcome in the process. (Free). ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education, University of Illinois, 805 W. Pennsylvania Avenue, Urbana, IL 61801.

Making the Most of Your Child's Education: A Guide for Parents
Elena Pell, 1989

This publication provides advice for Hispanic parents on how to help their children succeed academically. Each chapter includes discussion questions and exercises to help parents work with other parents to improve their children's success. ($5.00). Spanish translation available. ASPIRA Association, 1112 16th Street NW, Suite 340, Washington, DC 20036.

MegaSkills: How Families Can Help Children Succeed in School and Beyond
Dorothy Rich, 1988

This publication describes many easy, enjoyable, and inexpensive home learning activities for parents to teach children basic values, attitudes, and behaviors affecting their future achievement. Includes step-by-step instructions on how parents can teach MegaSkills at home, and helps parents make the best use of limited family time. ($8.95). Houghton Mifflin Company, Wayside Road, Burlington, MA 01803.

Parental Involvement in Education
U.S. Department of Education, 1991

Part of the Policy Perspectives Series, this report by James S. Coleman discusses "social capital"—social relations within the family or the community that are important for children's development. The author examines transformations in American households and asserts that schools have a new role to play in rebuilding social capital in communities and families. ($1.50). Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402.

Parent Education and Support Programs
Douglas R. Powell, 1990

This *ERIC Digest* describes current programmatic efforts to inform and support parents. It briefly reviews the research evidence on the effectiveness of parent education and support programs. (Free.) ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education, University of Illinois, 805 W. Pennsylvania Avenue, Urbana, IL 61801.

Parent Involvement and Success for All Children: What We Know Now
Susan McAllister Swap, 1990

This review of the evidence linking parent involvement and student achievement argues that an approach embodying "partnership for school success" holds the greatest promise for making an impact. ($7.50). Institute for Responsive Education, 605 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, MA 02215.

Parent Involvement in Elementary Language Arts: A Program Model
Marge Simic, 1991

This *ERIC Digest* documents a program to encourage parent participation in the elementary language arts classroom. The program addresses volunteering in the classroom as well as parental participation at home. (Free). ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills, Indiana University, Smith Research Center, Suite 150, 2805 East 10th Street NW, Bloomington, IN 47408–2698.

Parent Involvement in the Educational Process
David Peterson, 1989

This *ERIC Digest* discusses, in a question-and-answer format, the benefits of parent involvement, what parents can do to improve their children's performance, the special challenges of involving parents of at-risk children, how schools can get parents involved, and how districts can implement parent involvement programs. ($2.50). Publication Sales, ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management, University of Oregon, 1787 Agate Street NW, Eugene, OR 97403–5207.

GENERAL READING LIST (continued)

Parents and Schools. The Harvard Education Letter
November/December 1988

This newsletter discusses home reinforcement of learning, low-income children, and building trusting and respectful home–school ties. It also includes an interview regarding successful school–parent relationships and short sections on homework as a family activity and parents and special education placement. ($3.50). *The Harvard Education Letter*, 79 Garden Street NW, Cambridge, MA 02138.

Parents: Here's How To Make School Visits Work
U.S. Department of Education, 1986

This brochure discusses planning a visit; questions to ask on school atmosphere, curriculum, children's progress, and parent involvement; and suggestions for working parents. (Free). Education Information Branch, U.S. Department of Education, 555 New Jersey Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20208–5641.

Phi Delta Kappan
January 1991

This issue contains a large special section on various aspects of parent involvement, including articles on several state and school district initiatives, Chapter I programs, and federally funded demonstration programs. ($3.50). *Phi Delta Kappan*, P.O. Box 789, Bloomington, IN 47402.

Schools and Communities Together: A Guide to Parent Involvement
Karen Reed Wikelund, 1990

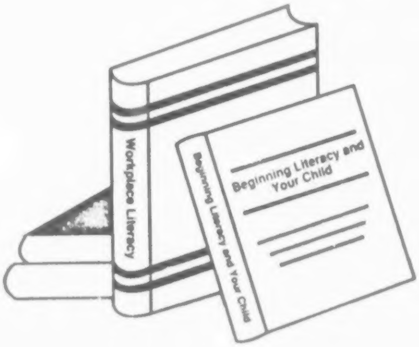
This publication offers tips and strategies for breaking down school–home barriers and bringing parents into their children's educational lives; describes roles and responsibilities for administrators, teachers, outreach workers, parents, community members, and children; and cites research and results of demonstration projects in two elementary schools. ($9.95). Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, Document Reproduction Service, 101 SW Main Street, Suite 500, Portland, OR 97024.

Together Is Better
Hispanic Policy Development Project, 1990

This booklet documents effective strategies (and warns against some noneffective ones) for encouraging and promoting increased involvement on the part of Hispanic parents. The strategies were the result of a 3-year effort involving 42 school projects nationwide. HPDP, Inc., 250 Park Avenue South, Suite 5000A, New York, NY 10003.

Working With Families: Promising Programs To Help Parents Support Young Children's Learning
U.S. Department of Education, 1991

This report describes the practices of 17 family education programs that seek to engage disadvantaged parents in assisting their children to succeed in school. Focusing on parents of children ages 3 to 8, the report offers practitioners' experience with such challenges as recruiting and retaining parents, determining staffing patterns, and establishing ties with the schools. (Free). U.S. Department of Education, Room 4049, 400 Maryland Avenue SW, Washington, DC 20202–4110.


Workplace Literacy
Beginning Literacy and Your Child
Beginning Literacy and Your Child

Organizations and Associations

Alliance for Parental Involvement in Education (AllPIE)
This parent-to-parent organization provides information about family education options (public school, private school, and home education), and parent and student rights within those options. Services include a newsletter, a book and resources catalog, a referral service, pamphlets, workshops, and conferences.
P.O. Box 59, East Chatham,
New York, NY 12060–0059.
(518) 392–6900. Program Contacts:
Seth Rockmuller and Katharine Houk.

ASPIRA Association, Inc.
A national Hispanic education leadership development organization, ASPIRA administers a national parent involvement demonstration project in Hispanic communities in nine cities and produces booklets to help Hispanic parents with their children's education. 1112 16th Street NW, Suite 340, Washington, DC 20036. (202) 835–3600. Program Contact: Lisa Colon.

Council for Educational Development and Research
The members of this association are long-term education research and development institutions that create programs and materials, including information on parent involvement useful for educators and parents.
1201 16th Street NW, Washington, DC 20036. (202) 223–1593. Program Contact: Diane Schwartz.

Hispanic Policy Development Project (HPDP)
This nonprofit organization encourages the analysis of public and private policies and policy proposals affecting Hispanics in the United States. After conducting a nationwide grant program, it produced a publication highlighting successful strategies for working with Latino parents. 250 Park Avenue South, Suite 5000A, New York, NY 10003. (212) 523–9323. Program Contact: Carmen Lydia Ramos.

The Home and School Institute (HSI)
For more than two decades, HSI has developed practical self-help programs to unite the educational resources of the home, the school, and the community. HSI is currently presenting MegaSkills seminars nationally to train parent workshop leaders (see General Reading List, page 13). Special Projects Office, 1201 16th Street NW, Washington, DC 20036. (202) 466–3633. Program Contact: Dorothy Rich.

Institute for Responsive Education (IRE)
This national research and advocacy organization studies schools and helps them become more responsive to citizen and parent involvement and concerns. IRE publishes the journal *Equity and Choice* and various reports and is principal contact for the new National Center on Families (see Department of Education Initiatives, page 7). 605 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, MA 02215. (617) 353–3309. Program Contact: Owen Heleen.

International Reading Association (IRA)
This organization works with parents, educators, and researchers to improve reading instruction and increase literacy. IRA also offers information to parents on how to develop lifelong reading habits with their children.
800 Barksdale Road, Newark, DE 19704–8139. (302) 731–1600.
Program Contact: Peter Mitchell, Executive Director.

Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF)
This civil rights organization conducts a Parent Leadership Program for promoting the participation of Latino parents as leaders at their children's schools. The program involves a 12-week course, including parent–teacher conferences and meetings with school district officials. 634 South Spring Street, 11th Floor, Los Angeles, CA 90014. (213) 629–2512. Program Contact: Luisa Perez-Ortega.

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)
NAEYC offers many resources for educators on all aspects of child development and early childhood education, including parent involvement. A free catalog is available. 1834 Connecticut Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20009. (202) 232–8777. Program Contact: Pat Spahr.

National Association of Partners in Education
This organization helps individuals and groups start and manage school volunteer programs and business–education partnerships. 209 Madison Street, Suite 401, Alexandria, VA 22314. (703) 836–4880. Program Contact: Daniel W. Merenda, Executive Director.

National Black Child Development Institute
This organization provides direct services and conducts advocacy campaigns to improve the quality of life for black children and youth. Family and early childhood education are emphasized, and speakers and publications are available. 1463 Rhode Island Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20005.
(202) 387–1281. Program Contact: Sherry Deane.

National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education (NCPIE)
This organization, composed of more than 25 national education and community life associations, is dedicated to developing effective family and school partnerships. To receive a free brochure, "Developing Family/School Partnerships: Guidelines for Schools and School Districts," other information about NCPIE, and additional parent involvement resources, send a stamped (45 cents), self-addressed, business-sized envelope to NCPIE, Box 39, 1201 16th Street NW, Washington, DC 20036.

National Coalition of Title I/Chapter I Parents (National Parent Center)
This organization provides a voice for Chapter I parents at the federal, regional, state, and local levels. The

(From The ERIC Review, Vol. I, Issue 3, Sept. 1991)

Coalition publishes a newsletter, provides training, and sponsors conferences. Edmonds School Building, 9th and D Streets NE, Washington, DC 20002. (202) 547-9286. Program Contact: Robert Witherspoon.

National Committee for Citizens in Education
This organization has many publications for parents and also provides free information and help for parents with school problems. Request a free bookmark with information on parent involvement in the middle school. 10840 Little Patuxent Parkway, Suite 301, Columbia, MD 21044. 1-800-NETWORK.

National Council of La Raza (NCLR)
This research and advocacy organization works on behalf of the U.S. Hispanic population and provides technical assistance to community-based organizations. NCLR's Project EXCEL is a national education demonstration project which includes tutoring services and parental education. 810 First Street NE, Suite 300, Washington, DC 20002-4205. (202) 289-1380. Program Contact: Denise De La Rosa.

National Information Center for Children and Youth with Handicaps (NICHCY)
This organization provides free information to assist parents, educators, caregivers, advocates, and others in helping children and youth with disabilities. NICHCY provides information on local, state, and national disability groups for parents and professionals and maintains databases with current information on disability topics. Publications include *News Digest* and *Parent Guides*. P.O. Box 1492, Washington, DC 20013. 1-800-999-5599.

Parent-Teacher Associations
National, state, and local PTAs have many resources and materials that can be used at home and at school to support children's learning. For a free list of publications, send a stamped, self-addressed, business-sized envelope to Publications List, National PTA, Department D, 700 North Rush Street, Chicago, IL 60611-2571. Local PTAs may also have the list.

Parents as Teachers National Center (PAT)
PAT encourages parents of children from birth to age 3 to think of themselves as their children's first and most influential teachers. It provides information and training to parents, supports public policy initiatives, and offers parent educator certification. University of Missouri-St. Louis, Marillac Hall, 8001 Natural Bridge Road, St. Louis, MO 63121-4499. (314) 553-5738. Program Contact: Claire Eldredge.

Parent Training and Information Centers, and Technical Assistance to Parent Projects
The Office of Special Education Programs supports a network of 60 Parent Training and Information Centers in all 50 states and Puerto Rico to enable parents to participate more effectively with professionals in meeting the educational needs of children with disabilities. Technical Assistance to Parent Projects (TAPP) provides technical assistance and coordination to the 60 PTIs and to developing minority programs in urban and rural locations. 95 Berkeley Street, Suite 104, Boston, MA 02116. (617) 482-2915. Program Contact: Martha Ziegler.

Federal Agencies

Department of Health and Human Services
Office of Human Development Services
200 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20201

- Administration for Children, Youth and Families
  (202) 245-0347

Department of Agriculture
Extension Service
3443 South Building
Washington, DC 200250

- Human Development and Family Relations
  (202) 447-2018

Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20202-7240

- Office of Educational Research and Improvement
  (202) 219-2050
- Center on Families, Communities, Schools, and Children's Learning
  (617) 353-3309
- National Research Center on Education in the Inner Cities
  (215) 787-3001
- Southwest Educational Development Laboratory
  (512) 476-6861
- Compensatory Education Programs, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education
  (202) 401-1682
- Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs
  (202) 732-5063
- White House Initiative on Hispanic Education
  (202) 401-3008

Clearinghouses

ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management
University of Oregon
1787 Agate Street
Eugene, OR 97403-5207
(503) 346-5043

ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education
University of Illinois, College of Education
805 W. Pennsylvania Avenue
Urbana, IL 61801-4897
(217) 333-1386

ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools
Appalachia Educational Laboratory
1031 Quarrier Street
P.O. Box 1348
Charleston, WV 25325-1348
(800) 624-9120

ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education
Teachers College, Columbia University
Institute for Urban and Minority Education
Main Hall, Room 303, Box 40
525 West 120th Street
New York, NY 10027-9998
(212) 678-3433

NCPIE Releases New Guide to Parent Involvement Resources

Washington, D.C., October 30, 1992--The National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education (NCPIE) has released the Guide to Parent Involvement Resources, developed under the leadership of the Council of Chief State School Officers. The guide is designed to help parents, educators, policymakers, and parent and community groups identify resources for the development of family/school partnerships. It features profiles of over 30 national education, research, and advocacy groups and describes their policies, services, projects, training activities, studies, and publications related specifically to family support, education, and involvement, and, more broadly, community involvement in education.

"We have heard the evidence over and over again--when parents are involved in their children's schools, they do better in school and they go to better schools. This publication will empower parents, teachers, administrators, and community leaders to find the information and the support they need to establish comprehensive parent involvement programs in their communities and schools," said Elena Pell, 1992 NCPIE Chair and Director of Program Development for The ASPIRA Association.

The guide identifies resources for: (1) specific types of parent involvement, including parent education, family support services, home-school communication, volunteer programs, home learning activities, and school improvement, governance and advocacy; (2) parent involvement research, policies, partnerships, and program development and improvement; and (3) families, teachers, administrators, school councils, parent groups, state education agencies, early childhood education, elementary school through secondary school, special education, bilingual education, and special outreach to single parents, teen parents, low-income families, and Latino and African-American families.

The Guide to Parent Involvement Resources was produced with support from the C.S. Mott Foundation. It can be ordered for $10.00 plus $2.50 shipping and handling from the National Committee for Citizens in Education, 900 2nd Street, N.E., Suite 8, Washington, D.C. 20002-3557 or call 202-408-0447.

The National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education is comprised of 34 national organizations involved in education, research, and advocacy. NCPIE's mission is to advocate for the involvement of parents in their children's education and to foster relationships between home, school, and community that can enhance the education of all our nation's young people.

PARTICIPANT EVALUATION FORM

Building School-Family Partnerships for Learning

Please help us improve future workshops by answering the following questions.

Name of Workshop: ________________________________ Date: __________

1. What was the most helpful aspect of this workshop? Why?

2. What was the least helpful aspect of this workshop? Why?

3. If this workshop is presented again, what would you change and why?

I am (check one)

___ a K-3 grade teacher
___ a 4-6 grade teacher
___ a principal
___ another school site professional (specify) ____________________
___ a school district staff member
___ a school district official
___ a parent
___ other (specify) ________________________

Thank you for taking part in this workshop and giving us your thoughts on it. We hope you will find it useful in building stronger partnerships with the parents of your students.

☆ U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE 1993 — 342-111/93164